



WELCOME!

The FFA Mission
FFA makes a positive difference
in the lives of students by developing
their potential for premier
leadership, personal growth and career
success through agricultural education.

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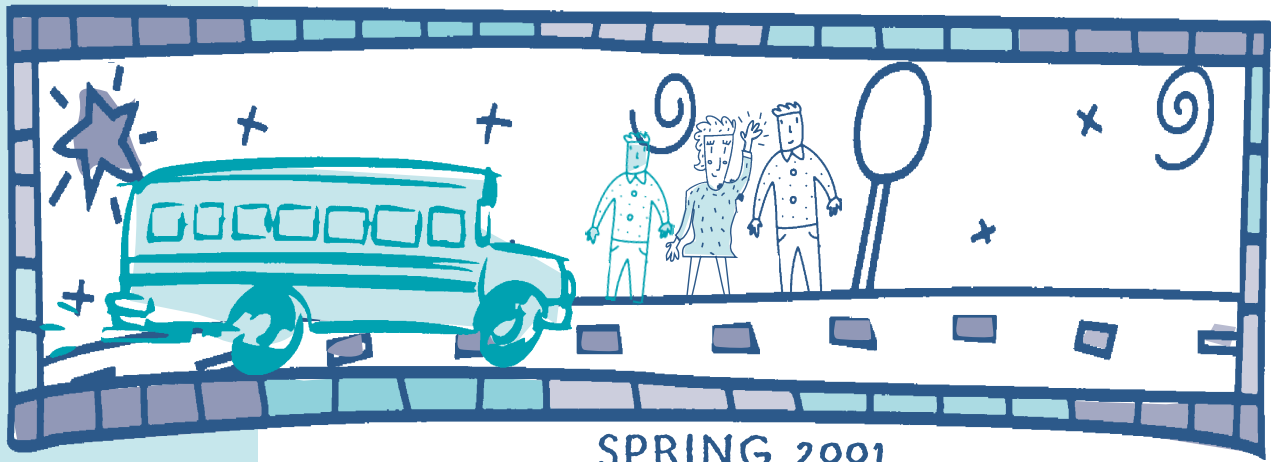
FFA Homepage: www.ffa.org

INSIDE:

- 3 Starting a PALS Program
- 4 Planting the Future



- 4 Snack Tracks
- 5 The Edible Aquifer
- 6 PALS Resources
- 7 Summer Celebrations
and Separations
- 7 Pennies and Pigs for PALS
- 8 Salad Project
- 8 Food Pyramid



SPRING 2001

PAL to PAL

A Newsletter for FFA Advisors and PALS Mentors

Why PALS?

Looking for a way to help your students
develop their leadership and personal
skills? Wish there was a program that
could help them develop their self-esteem
along with character and an attitude of ser-
vice? Look no further than FFA's Partnering
in Active Learning Support (PALS) program.

PALS is a structured mentoring program
designed to help FFA members build their
skills while working with elementary students
that have specific needs. This program has
been hailed as life-changing for FFA mem-
bers as well as their elementary partners.

Finding the Time

If you're thinking, "I'm too
busy now, I don't have time to
manage another program,"
you'd do well to consider the
advice given by veteran agri-
culture teacher Bill Bartow of
Alpena, Michigan. "When I
first heard about this program,
my initial thought was that agri-
culture teachers don't have time to
do this, we're too busy as it is!" Bartow
says. "But then, when I saw the difference it
could make in young people's lives, I decid-
ed that this program had to be a priority and

that I'd have to determine what other, less
effective things, I could sacrifice."

Bartow cites several examples of high
school students who would have dropped
out of school without the program. "This
program is just as beneficial to the high
school students as it is to their elementary
pals," Bartow says. "I have seen students
who were on the verge of dropping out
become active in this program and really
turn their lives around. On top of that,
these young people frequently engage in
volunteer activities far beyond their
involvement in PALS. It really is a
launching pad for building bet-
ter citizens."



Randy Wiggins, who teach-
es agriculture in Warden,
Washington, agrees. His
PALS mentors focus on
developing their mentees'
reading skills. "This program
really works," Wiggins says.
"Last year, our third-grade
mentees' reading scores in-
creased by 14 percent. By the end of

the year, all of the third-grade students
with whom we were working scored at or
above their grade level."

Continued on page 2

Program Results

Research bears out these assertions. In a survey conducted following the three-year pilot program, students and teachers reported lots of positive results, including:

- **53 PERCENT OF TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND COORDINATORS REPORTED IMPROVED SCHOOL PERFORMANCE AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.**
- **77 PERCENT OF THE TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND COORDINATORS REPORTED THAT MENTEES FELT SPECIAL, THUS IMPROVING THEIR SELF ESTEEM AND SELF CONCEPT.**
- **74 PERCENT OF THE MENTORS REPORTED THEY DEMANDED MORE OF THEMSELVES BECAUSE THEY VIEWED THEMSELVES AS ROLE MODELS FOR THEIR MENTEES.**
- **70 PERCENT OF THE MENTORS REPORTED THEY LOOKED FORWARD TO AND RARELY MISSED MENTORING DAY OR MENTORING ACTIVITIES.**
- **66 PERCENT OF THE TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND COORDINATORS REPORTED THAT MENTEES LOOKED FORWARD TO AND RARELY MISSED MENTORING DAY OR MENTORING ACTIVITIES.**
- **57 PERCENT OF TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND COORDINATORS REPORTED THE INVOLVEMENT IN FFA OF STUDENTS WHO TRADITIONALLY WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED (FEMALE, CULTURALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE AND AT-RISK STUDENTS).**
- **78 PERCENT OF THE TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND COORDINATORS REPORTED INCREASED SUPPORT FROM ADMINISTRATORS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL FOR PROJECT ACTIVITIES.**



leadership and personal relation skills. However, it becomes ag-related when ag-based activities are used.

"Elementary students love plants and animals," Bartow says. "We can take advantage of that and teach them all sorts of things about where their food comes from and the important role agriculture plays in all our lives. There are lots of neat activity ideas that are easy to implement. There is a great collection of these in the PALS Training Materials Kit and in the PALS activity handbooks."

For more detailed information on starting a PALS program in your school, click on [www.ffa.org/activities/pals/html/info.html], or contact Becky Meyer at the National FFA Organization via e-mail at bmeyer@ffa.org or by calling 317-802-6272. The PALS Activity Handbook is available on the 2001-2002 *Local Program Resource Guide*, which will be provided to all agriculture teachers this summer.



Making the Agriculture Connection

Many teachers can see the value in the program, but don't necessarily see how it fits into the agricultural education program. On its face, PALS is a mentoring program designed to develop student's

PALS Conference

Mark your calendars now! The 8th Annual PALS Mentoring Conference will be held Wednesday, October 24, in Louisville, Kentucky, in conjunction with the national FFA convention. In addition to lots of fun, the conference will give FFA members a chance to discover new ideas and develop hands-on skills for use in their local PALS programs.

Make sure your FFA chapter sends several representatives to be a part of this informative and inspiring event! All FFA chapters, advisors, state staff, school administrators and sponsors are invited to participate. To register or for more information, contact Becky Meyer at the National FFA Organization via e-mail at bmeyer@ffa.org or phone at 317-802-4262.



PAL to PAL is the newsletter of PALS (Partners in Active Learning Support), the National FFA Mentoring Program.

The Agricultural Education Mission

Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems.

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\$25 for Your PALS Program!

We pay \$25 for each idea we publish! If you have an activity idea to share with other PALS programs, send it to *PAL to PAL*, National FFA Organization, P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960. We hope to hear from you!

National FFA Organization

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Starting a PALS Program

DO YOU THINK YOUR STUDENTS, school and community could benefit from a PALS program? With all of the challenges today's young people face, most communities could.

When you get ready to start a PALS program in your chapter, take to heart advice from Kevin Woodrow, agriculture teacher at Cabot, Arkansas. Woodrow has had a PALS program since the program was launched in 1991. "I encourage teachers to employ the KIS system—Keep it Simple," he says. "Take the time to get organized and try to limit the number of participants until you've been through a year. Use this time to build quality relationships and get a smoothly working system in place. Then, you can add more students."

Getting Others Involved

One of the big keys to success in establishing a PALS program is getting the right group together initially. In addition to the agriculture teacher, the key players include:

- **HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL/ADMINISTRATOR**
- **HIGH SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR**
- **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**
- **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE COUNSELOR**
- **ELEMENTARY TEACHER(S)**
- **COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER**

This group is called the local PALS team and is responsible for implementing the training necessary and administering the program.

You should set aside a full day for the training session. By the end of the day, you'll have a solid plan that details the program's objectives and where you're headed in your school system. If possible, get a few chapters together in your state and plan a training workshop. Contact Becky Meyer at the National FFA

Organization, 317-802-4262, for more information. Another possibility is getting together with another school in your area that has an active PALS program and having them help walk you through the necessary planning steps.



During the first year, you might want to be fairly selective regarding the students who will be involved. They should be very responsible and be willing to devote their time to this effort.

"We hold a full-day training session during the summer," Zimmerman says.

"I feel that if the students are willing to make that commitment, they'll do well once the school year starts."

Training the high school mentors is a critical component to success. "We use the Mentor Training Activities Booklet in the PALS kit," Zimmerman says, "and feel it does a good job of preparing our students for their PALS responsibilities."

Engaging Students

Once the adult team is ready to go, it's time to get your students involved. "I tell my students a story about three stone cutters," relates Mark Zimmerman, the agriculture teacher at Spencer High School in Spencer, Wisconsin. "When asked what he is doing, the first stone cutter replies, 'I'm cutting stone.' The second stone cutter, when asked the same question, says, 'I'm making a living.' The third stone cutter responds, 'I'm building a cathedral.' I explain that we need to have the same kind of outlook as that third stone cutter. What we teach the next generation will outlast all of us. It is up to us to teach the younger students lessons of good character, honesty, warmth and encouragement."

Communicating

One of the most important, and sometimes most challenging, parts of this program is communicating—keying all the right people in the loop. You'll want to develop a communication strategy at the beginning of the year so you don't spend unnecessary time attempting to establish one when things get out of hand.



For more information about starting a PALS program in your chapter, contact Becky Meyer at the National FFA Organization via e-mail at [\[bmeyer@ffa.org\]](mailto:bmeyer@ffa.org) or by calling 317-802-4262.

ACTIVITIES

Look for more ideas in the PALS Activity Handbook.

Planting the Future

KEVIN WOODROW'S AGRICULTURE students at Cabot High School, Cabot, Arkansas, developed an activity designed to help their young pals learn to transplant bedding plants. As a bonus, the elementary students get to take home the plant they pot. Woodrow's students implement this activity in early May so that they plant can be presented as a Mother's Day gift.

SUPPLIES:

Each PALS pair will need one each of the following items:

- AN ORNAMENTAL BEDDING PLANT (CAN BE GROWN IN THE SCHOOL GREENHOUSE)
- 6-INCH POT (CAN BE RECYCLED FROM OTHER USES)
- POTTING SOIL
- PAINT STIR STICK (ASK LOCAL HARDWARE OR PAINT STORE(S) TO DONATE)
- SMALL AMOUNT OF ART/RAFT FOAM (AVAILABLE AT DISCOUNT AND CRAFT STORES)

• ASSORTMENT OF COLORED MARKERS

• PLASTIC CRAFT EYES (OPTIONAL)

EQUIPMENT:

The following items can be shared by multiple pairs:

- WHITE LATEX PAINT (OPTIONAL, CAN LEAVE STICKS NATURAL)
- SMALL PAINT BRUSH (OPTIONAL, CAN LEAVE STICKS NATURAL)
- FACILITIES TO CLEAN UP PAINT BRUSHES
- POTTING TOOLS (TROWEL, ETC.)
- SCISSORS
- GLUE (HOT GLUE WORKS WELL AND SETS FAST)

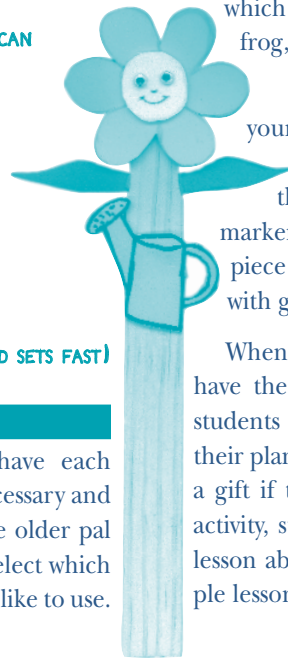
INSTRUCTIONS:

Assemble materials and have each older PAL gather the items necessary and place at their workstation. The older pal should help the younger pal select which bedding plant he or she would like to use.

Together, each group of pals may paint their paint stir stick and set it aside to dry. While it is drying, they can repot their selected plant into a 6-inch pot and create something out of the art foam with which to decorate their stick (bird, frog, turtle, star, etc.).

When the paint is dry, the younger pals should be instructed to write their names on their sticks using a colored marker. Then, the decorative foam piece can be affixed to the stick with glue.

When the activity is completed, have the older pals let the younger students know that they get to take their plant home and can present it as a gift if they'd like. To enhance this activity, students may want to teach a lesson about the water cycle or a simple lesson on photosynthesis.



Snack Tracks

Students in Randy Wiggin's Warden, Washington, FFA chapter use this activity to help their elementary pals develop math skills. It works well following a lesson on percentages.

SUPPLIES:

- POPCORN POPPER
- POPCORN, OIL, SALT
- BLANK PAPER
- TAPE
- YARD STICKS
- ASSORTED MARKERS
- DISPOSABLE BOWLS

INSTRUCTIONS:

Each PALS pair should have a sheet of paper and access to markers. Instruct the

younger pals to write their name on their paper and draw a picture of their favorite food. When they are finished, tape all the pages into a single block, using a blank sheet or two in the middle on which to set the popcorn popper.

Lay the taped-together papers on the floor and set the popcorn popper in the middle (on the blank pages). Add a little bit of popcorn and oil, and pop the popcorn leaving the lid off. When it is finished, have each elementary student count the number of pieces of popcorn on their sheet of paper, then place the popcorn in a bowl.

Distribute paper so that each youngster has a blank sheet of paper and a pencil. Going around the room, have each stu-

dent call out the number of pieces of popcorn on their paper. The students should record each number on their papers in a column. When everyone is finished, ask the students to add the columns. When they have the totals, ask them to figure what percentage of the popcorn fell on their sheet ($\text{number of pieces} \div \text{total}$).

While the elementary students are working the math, several of the high school students can be popping more corn. When all of the youngsters are finished, invite everyone to fill their bowls and enjoy a snack.



The Edible Aquifer

THE ELEMENTARY STUDENTS Cynthia Shaffer's PALS participants work with ate up this activity! Shaffer teaches agriculture at West Snyder High School in Beaver Springs, Pennsylvania. She recommends using this activity to teach students about groundwater and has found it especially popular on warm, spring days.

SUPPLIES:

Each PALS pair will need:

- CLEAR PLASTIC CUP (8 OZ. OR LARGER)
- STRAW
- TWO SPOONS

EQUIPMENT

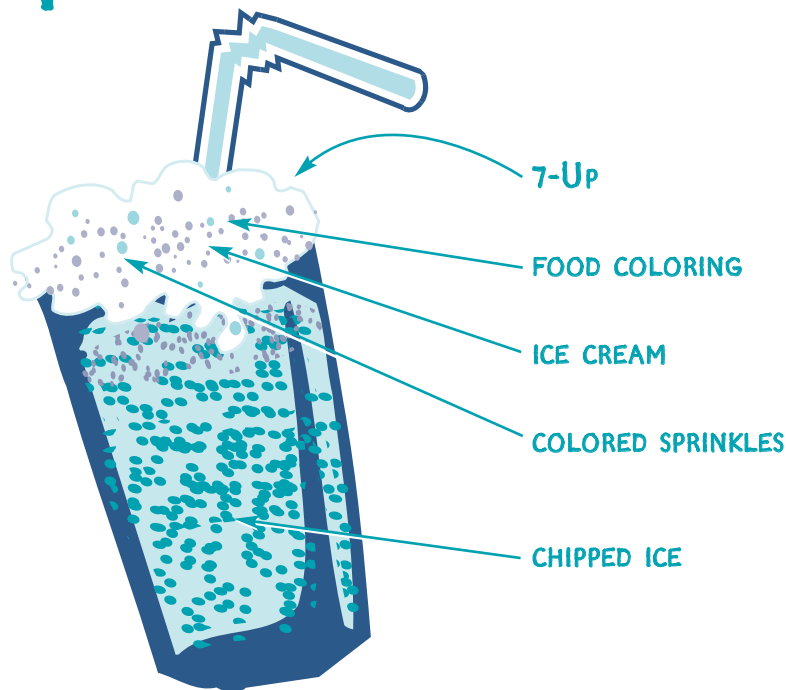
The whole group can share the following items:

- CHIPPED ICE
- ICE CREAM AND SCOOP
- COLORED SPRINKLES
- LARGE BOTTLE(S) OF 7-Up
- FOOD COLORING (PREFERABLY IN BOTTLES THAT CAN DISPENSE BY THE DROP)

INSTRUCTIONS

Have the high school students tell the elementary students about groundwater and how important it is to keep our groundwater clean. They should let the youngsters know that the activity they will do next illustrates how groundwater moves through the soil.

Have each PALS pair place a layer of chipped ice on the bottom of their plastic cup. The chipped ice represents a rock layer in the soil strata. Next, they should add a scoop of ice cream to represent a layer of soil. Then, sprinkle the ice cream with the colored sprinkles. Each color represents a different type of soil particle (sand, clay and silt).



Add a drop or two of food coloring. Indicate that the food coloring represents pollution, but that a small amount, such as a drop or two, really shouldn't matter (students will protest). Pour 7-Up over the top to represent water. They will be able to watch the food coloring dissipate throughout the cup.

Next, insert a straw through the middle of the cup to represent a well and take a sip out of the straw. Point out how "drawing water from the well" draws the "pollution" down into the "groundwater." Add more 7-Up (rain) and watch the "pollution" dissipate further. Conclude the activity with a message about the importance of keeping contaminants out of our groundwater, then let the students eat their "aquifers."



Above: FFA members use a groundwater flow model to explain the importance of groundwater to their fifth grade PALS. Following the demonstration, the group made edible aquifers (right).

PALS

RESOURCES

GRANTS

A NUMBER OF GRANTS ARE AVAILABLE to help fund mentoring activities. Cynthia Shaffer, who teaches agriculture at West Snyder High School in Beaver Springs, Pennsylvania, found funding through the state Department of Agriculture.

"They offer a Rural Youth Incentive Grant Program," Shaffer says. "we applied for and received \$1,900 to use for supplies and materials." Shaffer plans to use the funds to purchase learning lab kits and other supplies for the PALS program. Call your state departments of agriculture and education to see if they are offering any applicable grant programs.

WEBSITES

[WWW.DASNR.OKSTATE.EDU/FOOD_FIBER/INSIDE.HTM]

This site contains Oklahoma's Food and Fiber Systems Literacy information, plus links to many other sites.

[WWW.AGCLASSROOM.ORG/]

Agriculture in the Classroom is a grassroots program coordinated by the United States Department of Agriculture. Its goal is to help students gain a greater awareness of the role of agriculture in the economy and society, so that they may become citizens who support wise agricultural policies. The program is carried out in each state by individuals representing farm organizations, agribusiness, education and government.

[WWW.CFAITC.ORG/]

The California Foundation for Agriculture in the classroom site emphasizes the importance of teaching agriculture for everyone's benefit.

MATERIALS

PALS Activities Handbook I

This handbook consists of a collection of agricultural activities for use in your PALS program. It contains 80 easy-to-use, inexpensive lesson ideas to help your high school students prepare for their weekly PALS activities.

- **ITEM PALS AH, \$5.00 (SPONSORED BY THE W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION)**



PALS Activities Handbook II

A second collection of agricultural activities that are easy to use and inexpensive to implement. FFA members and their elementary mentees will benefit from these hands-on activities in horticulture, natural resources and animal science. There is even a special events section!

- **ITEM PALS AP, ONE PER CHAPTER FREE, ADDITIONAL CHARGE FOR SHIPPING (SPONSORED BY UNITED PARCEL SERVICE)**

PALS Brochure

This colorful piece can help spread the word about PALS and explain the program to key people in your community.

- **ITEM PALS BROCHURE, 1-50 = \$.90 EA.; 51 OR MORE = \$.80 EA. (SPONSORED BY THE W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION)**



PALS Promotional Poster

Build awareness for PALS by purchasing these two, full-color posters and displaying them in your classroom, community or counselor's office (posters are shipped folded). Development of posters sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

- **ITEM PALS ONE (HORIZONTAL), \$1.00 EA.; 3-5 = \$.95 EA.; 6 OR MORE = \$.90 EA.**
- **ITEM PALS TWO (VERTICAL), \$1.00 EA.; 3-5 = \$.95 EA.; 6 OR MORE = \$.90 EA.**

PALS Patch

This colorful, self-adhesive patch includes the PALS letters over the rainbow and five figures holding hands. It is a great gift idea and will stick to almost anything.

- **ITEM PALS PATCH, \$1.00 EA. IN BUNDLES OF 10, 50 OR MORE; \$.75 EA. IN BUNDLES OF 10**



Summer Celebrations and Separations

With the end of the school year comes buckets full of summertime activity anticipation and children of all ages become a little restless. Along with looking forward to summer fun, however, there is always a little sadness as we bid farewell to not only another school year, but often to friends that we'll miss.

This is the case with the PALS program, too. By this time of year, the PALS pairs have generally formed a solid bond and they can become anxious as they think about how they'll miss spending time with each other.

Keep Communicating

"Separating for the summer can be hard on both the older and the younger students," says Kevin Woodrow, agriculture teacher in Cabot, Arkansas. "We encourage them to keep the lines of communication open and they do a pretty good job of staying in touch over the summer. I don't know how many times I have had students come in and tell me how they saw their mentee in a store and how the little one just ran up and gave them a hug."

Many chapters address this anxiety through some type of a celebratory, end-of-the-year event. It can be anything from a barbecue to a pizza party to a more formal banquet-type activity. The key is to include all the pertinent people, including administrators, counselors and parents, and say thanks to everyone who helped.

Pizza Party

In Spencer, Wisconsin, a pizza party fills the bill. "We order pizzas plus a big cake and hold it during the school day," says Mark Zimmerman, agriculture instructor. "The elementary kids get to come into the high school, which they really enjoy. But the most important part is honoring each of the younger PALS. My students make up certificates for their mentees recognizing them for something they really improved on during the year or some other facet they enjoy. We've honored elementary students for everything from improved reading skills to having the nicest smile."

Pennies and Pigs for



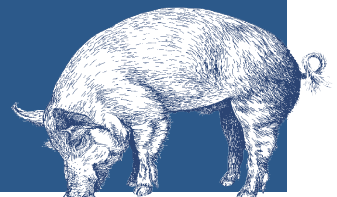
LOOKING FOR A FUN WAY to raise funds for your PALS program? The FFA members in Cabot, Arkansas, have a great idea. Each year during National FFA Week, they hold a penny drive, with each class competing against each other to raise the most money.

While they collect fairly aggressively on campus, they also establish collection jars in downtown business establishments, pleading patrons for their pennies. On average, they raise nearly \$1,000 with this activity.

The money is used to purchase t-shirts for all the mentees. They have the PALS logo printed on the front of the shirt and a list of all the participants from each school printed on the back.

The Cabot FFA Chapter works with four different elementary schools, so they use a different color for each school. The mentees are instructed to wear their PALS t-shirt on field trip day. "We've found the t-shirt colors quite helpful in identifying which student belongs in which group," says Kevin Woodrow, agriculture teacher.

The Cabot members also raise a PALS pig for their local fair. They sell tickets at the fair, which helps to promote the program. Then, they have a drawing and the winner receives the pig processed to their specifications by the local meat market. All the proceeds go toward the PALS program. "It provides a way for us to publicize the PALS program and raise money," says Woodrow. "We feel it's important for the FFA chapter to fund the program. We don't ever ask the elementary students to pay for anything. We don't want to put a financial burden on them."



MORE ACTIVITIES

Salad Project

The PALS participants in Greg Pile's Sumner, Washington, FFA Chapter developed an activity to help their elementary pals learn about plants and nutrition.



Known as the Salad Project, the project starts with a simple lesson on photosynthesis and what plants need to grow and thrive. At the end of the lesson, each PALS pair plants lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes and radishes in a flat (or in individual pots). The flats (or pots) are placed in the elementary school's greenhouse and the elementary students are responsible for watering them throughout the week. If the elementary school you're working with doesn't have a greenhouse, a sunny spot in the classroom will work.

During the next session, the high school students teach a lesson in nutrition and the role carbohydrates play in supplying our bodies with energy. The next week, the students present a short program on pollination.

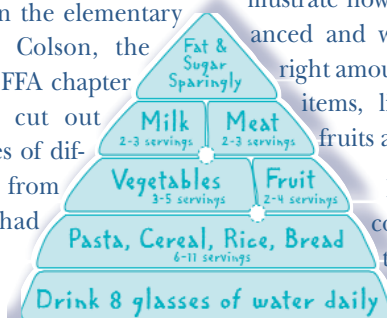
Each week, the PALS touch base to see how well their plants are doing with the older PALS providing instruction regarding watering and other growing issues. After six or seven weeks, the lettuce and radishes are harvested and everyone munches on a fresh, healthy salad.

For more information on this activity, contact the Sumner FFA Chapter at 253-891-5500.

Food Pyramid

The PALS participants in Cheryl Lowe's Woodstown, New Jersey, FFA Chapter have developed a great way to teach their elementary mentees about nutrition and agriculture by using a felt version of the food pyramid.

"We made a big food pyramid out of felt that we could put up in the elementary classroom," says Sara Colson, the PALS coordinator and FFA chapter president. "Then, we cut out food labels and pictures of different food products from advertisements and had them laminated."



The FFA members attached velcro to the back of each laminated food product and were ready to go. During the activity, the elementary students draw a food product out of a box and are asked to place it on the pyramid where they think it belongs. For example, if a student draws a picture of a cheerios box, they would place it in the breads and cereals area on the pyramid.

As the youngsters place each item on the pyramid, an FFA member talks about what the product is made of, how it is grown and what it provides nutritionally. You can use the appropriate number of products per food group, or you can choose to "overload" certain portions of the pyramid to illustrate an "out of balance" diet.

For example, many of today's young people eat far too many sweets and not enough vegetables. By loading the top of the pyramid with too many items, you can illustrate how the pyramid becomes unbalanced and why it's important to eat the right amount of the pyramid foundation items, like breads and cereals and fruits and vegetables.

For more information on conducting this activity, contact the Woodstown FFA Chapter at 856-769-3475.

Subscription Form

To continue receiving the *Pal to Pal* newsletter, please fill in the coupon below and mail it by August 1, 2001, to PALS Program, National FFA Organization, P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960, or fax it to 317-802-5262.

Advisor's Name: _____ Chapter #: _____ School: _____

Address: _____ City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Number of copies requested? _____

Do you currently offer the PALS program in your chapter? yes ☐ no ☐

If yes, how many FFA members are involved? _____

If no, are you interested in starting PALS in your chapter? yes ☐ no ☐



Partners in Active Learning Support