

11 April 2012, Renville County Farm Bureau Safety Camp

In your face farm safety session

Could you learn something about safety when a farmer takes off his artificial leg and explains why this prosthesis is now part of his daily life? Or would you pay attention when a student holds on to an aluminum tray and suddenly his/her hair is standing on end? How about when the County Sheriff shows three different guns and explains the 'knock down' power of a simple air rifle?

All that and more is the agenda of the May 22 Farm Safety Camp put on by the Renville County Farm Bureau. This Farm Bureau rotates locations of its Safety Camp each year amongst the 5 school districts in the County. This year the show goes to RCE (Renville County West), Renville, MN where 3rd, 4th and 5th graders will have a 2-hour session detailed as follows:

- Event starts at 8:30 a.m. with nine presenters, each a specialist in a particular area of safety.
- The students are divided into nine equal groups.
- Each presenter has 10-12 minutes for their presentation; then a whistle blows and students move to next presentation.
- After students have made the rounds of the first eight presentation, they assemble on gym floor for final presentation.
- Presenter is Gerald Mulder, Renville County farmer who 20 some years ago lost his leg in a silo accident.

And what a presentation. Mulder, active in both County and State Corn/Soybean Growers, starts his session sitting on a 'kitchen counter' stool with students on the floor in front of him. He takes a few minutes to share the history on how he lost his leg. Already student's arms are up asking questions. Like how did he get back down the silo chute? How did he get the silo unloader stopped? Why did it happen?

As we all know, kids get very attentive and do indeed ask questions when it sort of sounds like/looks like a grizzly story. But Mulder patiently and carefully answers each question. And now the interest perks up even more. He pulls up his trouser leg and calmly removes his artificial leg. Kids now focus in on his 'bald' knee because it doesn't have a leg attached below it.

Mulder then tells the students to pass his artificial limb around so all can see and touch and hold. He even brings a couple of 'used limbs' in his travel bag so everyone has a chance to touch and hold, if they want to. Yep, not all the students want to get quite that familiar with an artificial limb but the questions continue. He tells them how many years a limb lasts him; how his artificial limb feels in zero weather; what does a new limb cost; can you play golf wearing a limb (Yes, he can and does); and most importantly he tells the kids that safety is no accident.

Topics and presenters for this year's May 22 event are:

- Holli Schafer, Twin City Western Railroad, on the do's and don't of railroad safety.
- Diane Mitchell, Renville County Waste Management Coordinator, talking common hazardous wastes and what to do with them.
- Renville County Sheriff Scott Hable talking and demonstrating gun safety.
- Olivia Veterinarian Dr. Bobby Kopel discussing small animal care with a cat or dog she brings with.
- Lisa Lanning, Renville County 4-H coordinator with a heads up presentation of what should be in your bathroom medicine chest. Plus students get their own 'mini' safety kit.
- Renville-Sibley REA with a unique presentation on the exciting story of electricity in our daily lives. Plus that fun demonstration of getting a few volunteers to stand up, touch an aluminum dish, and suddenly their hair is standing up.
- Using teaching tools from the Farm Bureau Safety Trailer, FB Board members Joel Sullivan, Pat and Jolly Sullivan, and Jim Zenk show the hazards of grain bins, pinch point dangers around farm equipment plus the great teaching demo on 9-11 telephone procedures.

"We're somewhat amazed with the 'thank yous' from the students and their teachers. Teachers tell us this is a tremendously informative and useful session for their students and themselves. A few students even say this is the best school day of the year," said Joel Sullivan, Renville County FB President.