

## Federally-Recognized Tribes Extension Program

### 2008 HIGHLIGHTS

**FRTEP UNIT:** Mississippi

**PROGRAM AREA:** 4H Youth, (Agriculture and Natural Resources)

**PROGRAM TITLE:** **Where It Begins**

**Issue(s) Addressed:** The Choctaw tribe is located in central and southern Mississippi. The vast majority of tribal members live in rural areas where exposure to agriculture and many of the state's natural resources are limited. A very high percentage of tribal families live and work in these rural communities. With these limiting factors the children do not get hands on or up close experience with livestock, forestry, endangered species, or agriculture in general.

In respect to agriculture, surveys show that most children (not just Native American youth) believe that produce starts in the grocery store.

**Program Description:** The audience for this program is youth enrolled in the tribal 4H club or students between grades 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>. The program exposes the children to agriculture where it starts, the process in between, and the finished product.

The programs other facet is exposing the children to the natural world of wildlife, endangered species of Mississippi, Mississippi WMA's (Wildlife Management Areas), Wildlife Refuges and how Mississippi State University plays a role in both fields.

With this exposure the high school age students participate in an agriculture careers program conducted by the FRTEP agent. This program exposes the groups to other options to consider when choosing a field of study to pursue in college.

**Program Impact:** Over the past few years the program has conducted fieldtrips to Mississippi Wildlife Refuges, WMA's, Forestry businesses ( Plywood & Lumber Mills), MAFES ( Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Experiment Stations), catfish farm, sweet potato farm, horse training facility, and various agriculture related research sites at MSU.

Response from the tribal 4H leaders and teachers has been very positive. The usual evaluation comment is "The children got to experience something they may never had without this program." The 4H clubs have adopted this program and now incorporate it into the annual plan of work. Trips are now arranged for all eight tribal communities each spring break. The program has reached more than 300 youth thus far and averages approximately 40 hours of instruction for program participants each year.

