

Little Chute 4-H group takes part in windmill lesson

Children use bricks to grind wheat berries into powder

BY SHARON HANUSZCZAK-FROBERG • POST-CRESCENT EAST • June 9, 2009

LITTLE CHUTE — Thirteen-year-old Brandon Behrendt is looking forward to touring Little Chute's 100-foot windmill when it opens in the spring of 2010.

Thanks to a presentation by Robin Dekker, Little Chute Windmill Inc.'s executive director, Behrendt and other members of the Mighty Mustangs 4-H group in Little Chute have a better understanding of the function that windmills serve.

Using a set of bricks to represent how a windmill employs millstones to grind whole kernels of wheat, 4-H members tried their hand at grinding wheat berries into flour.

The exercise was a hit with the 17 youngsters who participated in the hands-on activity recently at the Village Hall.



Robin Dekker, Little Chute Windmill Inc.'s executive director, watches as members of the Mighty Mustangs' 4-H group in Little Chute use bricks to grind whole kernels of wheat into flour. Dekker used the hands-on activity to a better understanding of the function that windmills serve. Post-Crescent East photo by Sharon Hanuszcak-Froberg

"It was fun. The little kids got to do their part by collecting and measuring," said Behrendt, a seventh-grader at Little Chute Elementary School. "It was also a good thing that the big kids got to grind. We learned a lot about where mills are made."

Chuck George, the 4-H group's leader, said the grain-grinding activity was a follow-up to a presentation Dekker delivered earlier in the year on the Dutch heritage and the history of windmills.

"We set up this meeting so kids can actually do the hands-on, to see what it's like to get the wheat from the seed stage to the flour stage," George said. "It's a good activity. It helps them understand it's not just a windmill — it's actually got a purpose."

Youngsters listened closely as Dekker spoke about the \$2.5 million windmill slated to arrive in Little Chute from the Netherlands in February 2010. They were excited to learn that the windmill would be shipped in pieces and cheered when they heard the structure would be assembled on Main Street in the downtown for all to see.

“You’ll actually be able to drive by every day and get to see it built,” Dekker said as she showed pictures of windmills in the Netherlands. “Next to the windmill, there’ll be a museum displaying the history of Dutch settlement. You’ll be able to go through the different levels of the windmill and see it working.”

Dekker said she designed the hands-on activity to teach children about the power it takes for a windmill to grind grain into flour.

“They’ll see how long it takes to actually grind (wheat kernels) into a powder that you could use for baking,” she said. “Then they’ll measure it and they can figure out how long and how much energy it takes to make two cups of flour, which is what you need to make a loaf of bread.

“It’s always neat to think about how much our everyday lives have changed over the course of time. So it’s a way for the kids to learn about history and learn about windmills.”

Dekker said the activity is also a good way to educate children about the windmill that will be built in Little Chute.

“It’s one of the ways we’re trying to get kids involved in the Little Chute windmill project and fulfill our goal of providing educational opportunities,” she said.

The presentation was a hit with 9-year-old McKenzye Wymer, who also had a chance to sample homemade bread and butter.

“It was really cool,” Wymer said. “I liked grinding the seeds.”