

Wilfert Farms

Quality Home Grown
VEGETABLES

Nov. 19, 2018

Leadership, excellence, quality content and hard work, are all qualities which define the outstanding horticulture pathway in career and technical education in the Mishicot School system at our high school in Mishicot, Wisconsin.

We own and operate Wilfert Farms, LLC, which is a diverse farming operation with divisions of processing vegetables, fresh market produce, and grains and oilseeds. Our farm employs about 35 people during the season, many of who possess a variety of technical skills. As a strong advocate for agriculture in the midwestern county of Manitowoc, WI, we recognize the need for individuals with both college and technical education.

Where does it all start? It starts with people. Parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, chamber of commerce, but basically people who are willing to say we can do better. At our small rural school district in Manitowoc County, we have people who are willing to think outside the box. We realized not everyone needs a 4 year degree. Our school system became a member of the chamber of commerce. They have developed many good relationships with other business members. As members of the chamber also, we have witnessed these relationships first hand as we were one of those businesses.

Great ideas and great plans are very important, but they need great leadership to take it to fruition. With great leaders in place, including teachers, school boards, administration, and business partners, we've put together what we feel is a very successful program in the agriculture education area, specifically the horticulture pathway.

As students enter middle school, they are exposed to the beginnings of career guidance and advisement. The community is involved in this by being asked to be guest speakers to allow them to explore their options. We have spoken to middle school and high school classes through the Ag Education and the FFA which are both very important areas of the CTE. Being FFA Alumni members, this is the area we focus on as the alumni is a very important support area for our ag teachers and students.

The FFA promotes student development in many areas including factual scientific knowledge, speaking, writing, and interpersonal social skills. Part of the FFA experience includes classroom instruction in agricultural related study, competition in Career Development Events, (CDE's), and Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE's) or real world work projects. In the classroom, students can focus on areas of interest both narrow and broad. Because of our business partnerships, students may decide to work a set number of hours per week to get a feel for their area of interest. All job settings are set up to be both informational and educational. Students are required to have goals and set skill attainment levels. Their SAE's are also judged and compete at the chapter, district, sectional, state and national level. Our program has had numerous gold winners at the state level as well as national finalists and a national winner.

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Over the past number of years, we have been involved with numerous students in this program, some of whom have gone on to be successful employees with local businesses in their respective fields including as a crop production specialist who helps manage a business and a young lady whose SAE involved working in sales and marketing for us and is now in her second year of law school on a full scholarship at a top 30 law school. She is planning on returning to the local area to take a position with a large local financial institution.

The FFA students have developed a very successful floral program where they assemble and sell buttonneers and corsages for the high school prom and homecoming dances. They have done flowers for various high school performances and wedding venues for past students. They compete in and are very successful in Floriculture CDE's also.

Another area that is very beneficial to this program is our Ag Advisory Board, which is comprised of local leaders in various areas of the agricultural industry including extension people, bankers, farmers, and other local business people. They meet twice a year and discuss what they see in the areas of skills needed in future employees in order to fill their needs to be successful businesses. They look at how the curriculum is beneficial to them, and what, if any areas they feel need to be addressed in our ever changing society.

Having been involved with the students of our ag education program, the FFA and with the FFA Alumni at Mishicot for numerous years, we have seen the results of the hard work of both the teachers and the students involved in the career pathways that are part of the CTE programs. Undoubtedly the program works as the old African proverb say, "It takes a village to raise a child", and we've definitely witnessed that here at Mishicot.

Respectfully,



Dave Wilfert,
Wilfert Farms, LLC

Terri Wilfert

Date: November 18, 2018

Re: Letter of Support for Mishicot Ag Department

Dear Committee,

My wife, Tami, and I became familiar with Mishicot Ag Education and their teacher. about 10 years ago. I am a retired high school Ag teacher and FFA advisor. After retiring from teaching my wife and I opened Brilliant Blooms, a retail floral shop specializing in weddings, funerals and everyday uses of flowers. Tami serves on the Board of Directors for the Wisconsin and Upper Michigan Floral Association (WUMFA).

Mishicot has strived to take student education above and beyond the regular classroom. There have been Mishicot students entered in the WUMFA High School Design Contest the past two years. This past month, Mishicot hosted a Linear Design Class/Workshop for high school students and instructors. The class was taught by Lisa Belisle AIFD and attended by students and advisors from at least four different schools. Lisa has traveled the world educating floral design enthusiasts. Both at the WUMFA Convention and while working with Lisa, students had the opportunity to visit with actual florists and wholesale companies about their jobs and potential employment.

The Ag Department at Mishicot has partnered with several local floral industry companies. Here at Brilliant Blooms, we have advised students about floral training opportunities and provided floral material for their students to decorate the Mishicot gym for graduation. We will be helping their FFA Floriculture team. They have also worked with Doran's Wholesale and Schroeder Flowers in not only acquiring flowers but also advice in their many floral projects.

Jamie Propson, the instructor at Mishicot, has uniquely positioned her classes to have a 'real life' business component. Her classes interview perspective brides, compile cost estimates and have designed the floral bouquets, boutonnieres, corsages and arrangements for several weddings. Her classes design, build and sell corsages for school dances. The Greenhouse class holds a plant sale each spring. There is no better way to prepare students to be career ready than having them performing the actual tasks that someone in that profession must do. Because of this authentic work experience, several Mishicot students have gained part time employment in the floral business and several more are taking horticulture classes at a Technical College.

If you are looking for "rigorous, relevant and career ready" instruction and experiences, Mishicot Ag Department has what you are looking for. Tami and I wholeheartedly encourage their recognition!

If you have any further questions, please call Gordie at 920-419-1106.

Sincerely,



Gordie Gasch

Brilliant Blooms