

(Style on Dime) Gale Woods Farm teaches kids agriculture-food role

Written by Marcia Humphrey
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Nearly two months ago, towards the end of my children's spring break, I decided that I wanted to plan one last free or cheap outing before school resumed. My friend suggested that I consider visiting Gale Woods Farm.

She described it as a place where you can have a hands-on type of experience with animals and farm life.

To be quite honest, I am not particularly fond of being around stinky farm animals, but I thought, "It's not about me; this is for my kids, and I want to expose them to a variety of encounters." And my next thought was, "plus the price is right-around \$25 for the whole family."

Upon further online investigation, I learned that Gale Woods Farm was a 410-acre park and part of the Three Rivers Park District www.galewoodspark.com They happened to be having a special spring celebration that weekend.

It was no surprise that my kids were not so thrilled to be heading off to the farm that Saturday morning, but they did not get a vote-I'm the mama!

You see, we had just come from Wisconsin Dells, and comparatively speaking, the farm was far less stimulating.

On the way there, I shared with my children some of the many benefits of exploring new and different things.

After getting lost a couple of times we finally arrived at the Minnetrista farm, and judging by the number of cars, it seemed like "the happening place to be."

We started off our adventure with a visit to the animal stalls. Baby lambs had just been born that morning and it was so amazing to watch as their wobbly legs carried them over to nurse from their mamas.

My children were thrilled to be able to bottle-feed one of the sickly runts.

I never knew that a baby pig's squeal could sound so much like a human baby.

My favorite part of the farm visit was seeing the maple trees being tapped- sap, as clear as water, poured from the trees into the attached bags.

We all left the farm with a sense of awe at God's handiwork.

Simply amazing!

There is more than what meets the eye at Gale Woods Farm. This working educational farm offers kids of all ages an opportunity to learn more about the land's role in agriculture and food production.

Throughout the summer you can find a calendar full of activities that take you back to nature, back to basics. Here is a sampling of what Gale Woods Farm has to offer:

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***Spend Saturday Morning on the Farm:** Throughout the summer, from 9-Noon, all ages are invited to explore the farm, meet animals and help with chores and seasonal activities --cost: \$4

***Buy Farm Fresh:** There is beef from grass-fed cows, hormone-free and antibiotic-free eggs, turkeys, and lamb. There is even a community supported agriculture (CSA) program, through which they sell a share of all the produce grown on the farm during the season. The popular CSA program is currently sold out for the 2009 season.

***Attend Folk School:** Learn about food, farming and artistic crafts, like weaving and cord braiding. Classes start at around \$5.

***Outdoor Recreation:** On Whitetail Lake enjoy canoeing (rental available) and fishing or hike and bike through the serene trails. B.Y.O.B.-bring your own bike and don't forget the fishing license.

Could you and your family benefit from taking time to unplug from overstimulation and the family's favorite gadgets and plug into the back-to-basics simplicity Gale Woods Farm offers? Here are a couple of questions that may help you answer that.

1.
Does your child think that potatoes grow in the shape of French-fries?

2.
Does your little one think that high-fructose-corn

-syrup is a vegetable?

If you answered yes to either question run, don't walk, to the nearest farm.

Let your little fellow learn about how Mary's little lamb can provide both dinner

and

a nice wool sweater too!

Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.