

'City kids' get a taste of farm life

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Samantha Jo Fredin takes care of her calf from Owatonna Community Education's Cow Camp as Jose Reyes looks on. During cow camp, students age 6 to 14 spent a week learning about farm life and having cattle.

By **WENDY REUER**

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OWATONNA — “City kids” got a chance this summer to find out what it’s like to be one of the “farm kids.”

It was the idea behind “Cow Camp” at Owatonna Community Education as 16 kids, ranging in age from 6 to 14, spent a week learning about farm life and what it is like to take care of a calf.

Each child was assigned his own calf, many of which ranged in age from just a few days old to a few weeks. The students then learned how to feed them, bathe them, teach the calf manners and how to lead or walk with the calf.

The class is in its second year, led by Community Education Director Debbie McDermott-Johnson.

“This is my passion — working with cows,” McDermott-Johnson said.

With help from her husband, Glenn Johnson, who donated almost all the calves used by the students, each student was able to name his own calf and get to know them on a personal basis.

“It was a lot of fun to watch them learn. Some learn so quick. The questions they ask are always interesting too,” Johnson said.

Student Jose Reyes named his calf “Bella” after a character in the popular novel series, “Twilight.”

Reyes danced a fine line between letting his calf play and keeping a handle on him Thursday as the students and calves presented themselves to other Community Education students.

“She wants to play,” Reyes said of his calf. “They run to play.”

South Dakota State University also lent a calf to the class and the Steele County Dairy Association provided transportation for the students to the McDermott-Johnson farm. Students spent one day in the classroom and the rest of their time was hands-on learning.

Mother Melissa Tellijohn allowed her two boys — Elijah, 8, and Isaiah, 7 — to participate in the class,



after hearing how much fun a friend had in the class last year.

“It’s been nothing but excitement all summer. We’ll definitely do it again next year if we can get in,” Melissa Tellijohn said.

Tellijohn said no one in the family is related to farm life so the camp was a new experience for the boys.

“We’re city folk,” she said with a laugh.

Also a city dweller, Ian Crum was the one to get the Tellijohn’s interested in cow camp as he enrolled in the camp last year.

This year, since Crum is quickly becoming experienced, McDermott-Johnson said she allowed him to have a larger calf, “Splash.”

Crum said it was a little tougher keeping Splash, who is nearly as tall as he, in order, but it was still fun.

Crum said farming is definitely something that may be in his future.

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