



## Classroom Heritage Chicken Hatching Project

This past spring, The Livestock Conservancy was approached by Ginger Cunningham of our local Cooperative Extension to help with an embryology program was conducted by a 4-H School Enrichment Project. Previously the program acquired eggs from a local commercial hatchery but our good friends at Extension believed that perhaps it would be more interesting for the students and teachers if they used Heritage breed eggs. That's when Ginger came to the Conservancy.



The program was funded by the United Way of Chatham County, NC and is an annual program for Chatham County Public Schools. Chatham County 4-H furnished 4-H embryology curriculum, materials, and incubators for each classroom. The Conservancy, through staff member Jeannette Beranger, provided eight dozen Buckeye chicken eggs for incubators. In addition, Conservancy member Dr. Julie Gauthier of Chickcharney Farm kindly supplied over three dozen Saxony and Magpie eggs for classrooms focusing on ducklings.



The embryology program emphasized a “hands-on” learning experience for the cycle of life requirement in the schools’ science curriculum. The program involved incubating eggs for 21 days in a still-air incubator while learning about life cycles and proper care for animals. Students were tasked with caring for the fertilized eggs and then the chicks after they have hatched. At the conclusion of the session, all chicks are returned to their respective breeders. It was a win-win for both the schools and the farmers!

For the first time, the program classrooms were able to expand the educational message by teaching the kids about various rare breeds of chickens and ducks and the necessity to work to

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save these creatures. Caring for and learning about rare breed birds provided an extra special experience for both the youth and the teachers and was very well received by all.

Six schools and 16 classrooms within reached out to approximately 400 children to participate in the project this year. For Julie and Jeannette it was an extremely rewarding and touching experience especially after receiving hand written “thank you” cards from each and every student that included their personal thoughts on their experiences with the chicks and ducklings.



The Livestock Conservancy would like to expand and replicate this program nationally and we encourage any Conservancy members interested in developing a poultry program similar to the Chatham 4-H, to contact us and learn how.

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