

Industry Tour Introduces Students to Iowa Entrepreneurs



Exploring Iowa's agricultural entrepreneurship landscape is important to the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative (AgEI) program. Students in the AgEI program sought out this local entrepreneurial experience to expose them to Iowa business entrepreneurs.

Twenty students participated in this year's "Entrepreneurship Around Iowa" industry tour. Students had the opportunity to visit with companies in central Iowa's rich small-business economy: Stine Seed Company, Capital City Fruit, La Quercia and Jasper Winery.

From viticulture to seed production and niche food procurement, students were given the opportunity to see inside Iowa's small businesses.

Harry Stine, founder of Stine Seed, said students must be willing to think 40 years down the road, not just 5 to 10 years.

Capital City Fruit exposed the group to the art of marketing fruits, vegetables and everything in between for local markets, such as Fareway and HyVee.

Herb and Kathy Eckhouse, owners of La Quercia, shared advice on how to turn a passion into a business. They explained that after they visited Italy, there was no prosciutto in the United States, so they started making their own.

Jasper Winery provided a look into Iowa's rapidly growing viticulture market and the opportunities it offers to new entrepreneurs.

Throughout the tour students were able to gain an understanding of the opportunities Iowa has to offer to entrepreneurs. Students came back with several ideas, which they may turn into the next successful Iowa entrepreneurial story.

