

Game teaches city slickers about farm life

CALEDONIA — It's a board game with a difference.

First, there's no board.

Second, the winner doesn't necessarily win and the loser doesn't necessarily lose.

Otherwise, it's just like any other board game.

Well, not exactly.

It's played with dice, but the order of play is decided in a unique way. The first roll of the dice goes to the person with the biggest feet.

Bigfoot rolls the dice and advances tokens around the board. The tokens are somewhat different — tiny farm animals, nuts, bolts and washers.

And city slickers should be careful while playing this game. They might learn something. They might learn about life on a farm.

The game was invented by four women who grew up on farms and they think it's about time city folk learned that all foods aren't made in a grocery store.

"Children watch a cow being milked and it's 'Yuk, where's the container?'" says Doris Popper.

Yuk, is right. Is she telling us our milk comes from the belly of a cow?

What's she going to tell us next? Potatoes grow under dirt, steaks are animal parts?

"Hamilton has so many rural areas at its doorstep," says Doris. "But many young people don't know where their food comes from.

"We think it's important they have the opportunity to learn more about farming."

Doris, Verna Loewith, Eleanor Wood and Jinnie Wilson were volunteers with the Federation of Agriculture and they were part of a project to bring agricultural studies into the classroom.

They came up with Farm Kit, a hands-on teaching aid that uses models of farm machinery along with activity cards with messages that include information on planting, harvesting, conservation and safety.

The project was an instant hit and many schools requested one of their



Mike Hanley

own. But the kits were expensive and raising money would be more time consuming than a small group of volunteers could afford.

They decided to turn the kit into a business.

"Raising money would have been a full-time job," explains Verna. "We decided, if this is going to fly, it would have to do so on its own."

They built more kits, developed smaller and less expensive kits and later added the game.

Business is flying.

They were in Caledonia last week to introduce the game during a meeting of the Women's Institute. They've also attended education conferences and visited schools.

Realistic

They've sold games to schools from Nova Scotia to British Columbia.

The game is called Agri-Venture and it has 401 cards that contain variety of activities. Some are riddles while others will challenge players with questions associated with farming.

The situations paint a realistic picture of farming and it's not always pretty. Some cards will deal with climate, plants, animals, machinery and money.

Players might learn the farm needs a new drainage system, but circumstances might suggest the work is beyond their budget.

And they could draw the game's most dreaded card — Bankruptcy.

"They will learn reading, math, problem solving and money handling," says Verna. "And they will learn the importance of punctuality and hard work."



Mike Hanley, The Spectator

Doris Popper and Verna Loewith with game.

The players move around the board according to the seasons and the first player to finish is expected to return to the board and assist the slower-moving competitors.

"It teaches players the importance

of co-operation," says Verna. "Life is not a race to the finish line."

If you have a story idea from Haldimand-Norfolk, Niagara or Brant call me collect at 526-3207.