



Renee Bodine / Forest Service

Children with the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood program picked and cooked with blueberries Aug. 27 at Bow Hill Blueberries in Bow.

Students get in touch with food during outing to Bow Hill farm

By **RENEE BODINE**
For The Skagit Valley Herald

Squeals of delight echoed throughout the farm as children discovered a small garden snake nestled in the branches of a blueberry bush. They were with Kulshan Creek Neighborhood program Aug. 27 touring the Bow Hill Blueberries just north of Burlington.

The 32 elementary to high school-age students spent the day learning about the history of the farm, which has been family owned since 1947, picking, eating and cooking with blueberries.

Adults from the Catholic Housing Services, Forest Service and Mount Vernon Police Department led small groups of kids through the rows of blueberry bushes as they ate, picked and deposited them in plastic buckets hanging by a string

around their necks.

Children made blueberry pancakes and created blueberry-themed art with lots of glitter. They drank blueberry smoothies and learned that it took 900 berries to make shakes for all of them.

Britney Covarrubias, 12, liked learning to make homemade pancakes the best. "They are so much better than the ones in the box," she said.

Farm owner Susan Soltes said she thought it was important for the children to see the source of their food and taste the berries fresh.

"We want kids to be in touch with real food, then to learn how to cook and eat it," Soltes said. "That is why we had the kids first pick blueberries, then come into the barn for a cooking class where we compared boxed pancake mix with

multiple unpronounceable ingredients — and imitation blueberry pieces — to the five real ingredients it takes to make blueberry pancakes from scratch."

At the end of the day, the farm donated 100 pounds of the fruit the kids had picked to take home to their parents. Mouths and hands were stained blue as children climbed aboard the school bus to go home.

The Mount Vernon Police Department started the Kulshan Creek Neighborhood Program in 2007 with the Forest Service, National Park Service and North Cascades Institute to expose urban Hispanic kids to the outdoors and careers in natural sciences.

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