

# Students stop on cross-country tour of the U.S.

Saturday was day five of the Eastern Mennonite High School Discovery 2011 cross-country tour to introduce the young people to the various cultures of the United States.

Brad Shields, Goodland businessman and Kiwanis member said this was the third time the tour had stopped in Goodland.

The big red bus stopped for lunch near the Van Gogh painting, and the 42 students and 11 adults said they were enjoying the trip. They students and adults are on a month long journey that will take them to Alaska and back across part of Canada before dropping into Minnesota and finally back to Harrisonburg, Va.

Myron Blosser is the organizer and said he felt it was a good way to show the kids what their world looked like outside of Virginia. This is the seventh time the school has made the tour, and this year they are making the trip to Alaska and back across Canada.

Shields said they had a good stop and honestly enjoyed spending time around Goodland. He said the group purchased a generator from Shores Brothers, and one of the students spent a little time in the emergency room.

Two of the students Jared Geil and Kendal Slabach Brubaker described their trip and stop at Goodland on Saturday.

"When we arrived, we met with Brad Shields, who began by showing us a grain storage facility that was being built," the students wrote on the Facebook page. The amount

of wheat that was grown and stored in Sherman County surrounding Goodland was massive; it could feed 1/3 of the U.S. with one loaf of bread for a day.

In Goodland there is an average of 18 inches of rainfall a year. This means most of their fields are irrigated, with most of the water coming from the Ogallala aquifer. They started to irrigate their land in the 1970's. They are using the water quicker than it is replenished, so there are major restrictions on the amount they can use. The land is sprayed with chemicals to sterilize the ground to control weed growth when the crops are not in the ground. Brad said because of the price of land it is "pretty much impossible" for a young farmer to get started.

"Shields took us on a tour of the equipment dealers in Goodland. He showed all the equipment farmers use for their operations for growing and harvesting. The most expensive combine sold there was \$350,000, and the most expensive tractor there was \$300,000. Brad then took us on a roadside tour of some of the fields around Goodland. In one area there was a hailstorm that destroyed over 200 acres of crops. The farmers safeguard against this by buying hail insurance that pays them for a lost crop. Once we got over 10 ten miles out of Goodland, we were told that we could see Goodland, and we could. After our tour of the farms, we went to a local grain co-op and saw how they packaged their beans and where those beans went. Brad took us to his family's farm once



Students on the Discovery 2011 cross-country tour stopped to eat during their stop in Goodland. They are students at the Eastern Mennonite High School at Harrisonburg, Pa. This is the third time for the tour to stop in Goodland.

Photos by Tom Betz  
The Goodland Star-News



we were done and showed us his brother's seed operation. We got to taste multiple varieties of wheat right out of the field.

In the evening, at the local Armory, where we stayed, we talked to Jeff Deeds, who is a grain farmer, and his family. They only raise

crops; they raise no animals at all. He talked about how he farmed, telling about how he rotates different crops every year. His equipment is GPS guided, which means it can basically run itself; there only has to be a person in there to make sure nothing goes wrong. He told us in

the past farmers needed 15 workers to help them farm; today they need about 6 because of technological advances. Deeds likes all the technology he has access to; it allows him to do more tasks at once more efficiently when he is working.

At the end of the day we went to

downtown Goodland for ice cream at the Vault Creamery, which is owned by Deeds. By 11 p.m. we were in bed, most of us sleeping in the gymnasium.

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