

Tractors: Not Just for Farms

By Michelle Tran

When we're talking about driving in the city, what comes to mind? Cars? Buses? Or maybe tractors? Yes, you read that right. Contrary to what many people believe, tractors aren't just found in rural farm areas. They can be used in places like nursery gardens, city streets for snow plowing, and construction sites. The capabilities that tractors have are numerous. Wouldn't it be fantastic to know how to operate one? This summer, I had the wonderful chance to witness the Farm to School agriculture interns train for their tractor certification at Humboldt High School.

This amazing opportunity for the interns was offered through University of Minnesota Extension. The Extension program offers a variety of courses that people can sign up for. The interns specifically participated in the Youth Tractor and Farm Safety Extension that was split into a ten day online learning experience, and a four day hands-on training session. Under the teachings of Extension instructors, Emily Krekelberg and Emma Severns, the interns learned about the importance of farm safety, danger of distractions, and how to properly drive a tractor with and without a trailer.



Humboldt instructor Bradley Novacheck, interns Sinella Caban, Victoria Lee, Jocelyn Mann, Jasmine O'Neal, and Humboldt student Po Si, listen to Extension instructor Emily Krekelberg explain how to attach the power take-off shaft to the tractor.



On the interns' third training day, it was incredible to see how much they had learned in a short period of time. Although nervousness could be seen on their faces as each of them took turns practicing, they all did very well in the end. "Once you get used to it,

you understand it better,” intern Sinella Caban explained. They were only driving the tractor at ten miles per hour, so the speed was not too much to handle. According to another intern, Jocelyn Mann, the trickiest part “was backing up the trailer and remembering that the wheels turn the opposite way it is steered.”

Intern Jocelyn preparing for her first attempt of driving a tractor with a trailer.

When asked how they feel about the tractor training, Jasmine O’Neal responded, “I was excited because the certificate is really cool.” It is an awesome thing to put on a resume especially when applying for urban jobs like commercial landscaping. In Victoria Lee’s case, “[the training] helped me be a more careful driver and I can help more with the family farm.”

What a fun and beneficial learning experience for these interns! After seeing this training course in action, I will definitely share it with other youth who might not know that learning to drive a tractor in a city space is an opportunity that’s available.