Standing outside a back entrance, you could hear the buzz of little voices coming from inside the MTSU Tennessee Livestock Center. It was about 300 children — the first of three waves of youngsters to come Tuesday (April 17) for the fourth annual Ag Education Spring Fling — visiting various agriculture-related stations during their two-hour visit to learn about life on a farm.

They saw horses, pigs, a cow, ducks and other animals. They learned about honey bees, soil, where food comes from and more. They could walk or run through a straw maze, play cornhole, make a Holstein dairy cow puppet craft and learn about how fruits and vegetables are grown. Some even brought a sack lunch.

More than 900 elementary-age school children — from Christiana, Campus School, Thurman Francis, Blackman and Smyrna — plus teachers, parents and more than 80 combined MTSU agritourism class and agriculture students kept things hopping in the livestock center.

“Our students will get as much out of this as these children will,” said Alanna Vaught, a School of Agribusiness and Agriscience instructor who oversaw her fourth agritourism class-led Ag Ed Spring Fling. “It’s very important to educate children about agriculture. Without agriculture, there would be no food and no farms.”

Thomas King, 7, a Christiana Elementary School first-grader, was a fast learner. “I milked a cow and picked different (plastic) vegetables and fruits,” he said. “I learned that farming’s not about being easy.”

Camden Campbell, 5, a kindergarten readiness Blackman Elementary student, enjoyed cornhole, made a puppet and played in the playground.

“It was 100 percent fun,” Campbell said. “I was excited about seeing animals. I want to pet a scorpion.” While there were other animals, there thankfully was no scorpion sighting for youngsters still learning about the animal kingdom.

Junior agribusiness major Rachel Elrod, wearing a pink beekeeper suit, said one child told her, “I didn’t know girls could be beekeepers.” Elrod’s most-asked questions from children: “Can they sting you through your suit and does it hurt when they sting?”

MTSU alumna Heather Brunk, district technician with the Rutherford County Soil Conservation District, escorted the youngsters through a plastic tunnel.

“We tell them we’re here to conserve our natural resources, soil and water,” she said.