Continuing A Legacy Of Farm Safety Education

Spring is here, grass is growing and planters are rolling. Safety can’t be overlooked during this busy time of year. According to the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, every three days a child dies and every day 33 children are injured in agriculture-related incidents. To protect the future generation of farmers, a focus on youth farm safety education must remain at the forefront.

Farm Safety For Just Kids (FS4JK), an organization committed to providing safety education to children in rural communities, recently announced it will dissolve after nearly three decades. In doing so, the organization feels the mission of making agriculture safer for youth will be better served by combining its resources and assets with the Progressive Agriculture Foundation, which organizes more than 400 youth safety events each year through its Progressive Agriculture Safety Day® program.

“We are honored that FS4JK has entrusted our program to continue with their farm safety legacy by donating its assets,” says Susan Reynolds-Porter, chief executive officer of the Progressive Agriculture Foundation. “These funds will be used to help us provide the training, resources and support needed for even more communities to conduct Safety Days for children.”

The foundation is welcoming FS4JK chapters that want to continue their efforts through the Safety Days program and will share FS4JK educational resources on its website.

According to Marilyn Adams, FS4JK founder and president, “We feel the organization has accomplished what we set out to do 30 years ago: to support farm safety education in the United States and around the world. This transfer of assets will further the mission we all have worked hard to accomplish.”

In the fall of 1986, Marilyn’s 11-year-old son, Keith, suffocated in a gravity flow wagon of corn while helping with harvest on his parents’ farm. Months later, Marilyn was helping her daughter with an FFA project. While researching farm safety, she uncovered that Keith’s story wasn’t unique. After continually reading stories about hundreds of children dying on farms each year, Marilyn founded Farm Safety For Just Kids in the hopes of preventing another tragedy. From its humble beginnings as a grassroots movement that started out of a spare room in Marilyn’s Iowa home, the organization has reached thousands of children, families and communities with life-saving information.

The Progressive Agriculture Foundation plans to continue the legacy of FS4JK throughout North America. Formed in 1995 in response to countless news stories featured in The Progressive Farmer magazine on farm injuries and fatalities, many involving children, the Safety Day program was created to reduce these tragedies. In the first year, 19 Safety Day events were hosted across the Midwest and the South. Now in its 23rd year, the program has grown to be recognized as the largest rural safety and health education program for children in North America, impacting more than 1.5 million youth and adults.

For more information on safety or for details about hosting, donating to, volunteering at or attending a Progressive Agriculture Safety Day, visit progressiveag.org.

Bernard Geschke, Program Specialist for the Progressive Agriculture Foundation, and Farm Safety For Just Kids founder, Marilyn Adams, have worked in farm safety together for more than 20 years. Although retiring full-time from the FS4JK organization in 2012, Adams remains a strong farm safety advocate.