

# IAA Instructor Ingram Leads AgDiscovery Program

By Kirsten Petersen

Young agricultural enthusiasts from across the nation came together July 10-29, 2011 to learn about career opportunities and experience college life during AgDiscovery, a three-week educational program hosted by the University of Maryland.

AgDiscovery is sponsored by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Students in the program live on campus and are enrolled in a 3-credit course, "AgDiscovery: An Educational Odyssey Exploring Food, Culture, and the Environment" (AGNR100). The goal of AgDiscovery is to give students a more holistic perspective on careers and opportunities in agriculture.



IAA instructor Ken Ingram (far left) stands at the M-Circle with AgDiscovery participants, mentors, and AGNR staff. Ingram served as an AGNR100 instructor. *Photo by Edwin Remsberg*

Sixteen students, ranging in age from high school freshmen to recent graduates, participated in AgDiscovery, hailing from states like California, North Carolina and Indiana. Four university students served as mentors, assisting with activities, projects and field trips and introducing participants to university life.

IAA instructor Ken Ingram served as an AGNR100 instructor and was instrumental in coordinating presentations and field trips for Ag Discovery.

"Overall, [the participants] were very smart," said Ingram. "They were good students."

Each day, participants studied agricultural history, culture and current issues. Topics included plant and animal science, entomology, food science and landscape architecture. Students also engaged in hands-on activities and visited research and government facilities on field trips.

Emmaline Perisho, a freshman homeschooled student from Terre Haute, Ind., enjoyed AgDiscovery's classroom activities.

“I really liked the economics classes and the landscape architecture, and these are things that I’d never be able to learn about if I didn’t come here,” she said.

Field trip destinations included the USDA, the National Zoo, Capitol Hill and the DuPont Research Laboratory in Dover, Del.

Eli Huggis, a junior high school student from Fort Washington, Md., was introduced to opportunities in plant science through a trip to Brookside Gardens.

“My favorite [field trip] was going to the Brookside Gardens because I was able to find out about the career of horticulture, and that was one thing I’d really like to do, and it sounds pretty cool.”

Ingram ensured that the program’s daily activities ran smoothly, confirming reservations and preparing a final exam for the students. He also traveled on the field trips with participants and gave a lecture on the campus arboretum.

“Ken was cool too, he was a cool guy,” Huggis said. “He’s a very energetic presenter. He’s hilarious. ”

Nicholas Arbasak, a junior high school student from Philadelphia, Pa., had never taken agriculture courses before AGNR100 and enjoyed having Ingram as an instructor.

“It’s nice to know that he’s not really strict and kind of laid back. He was also really fun,” Arbasak said.

“He was a good professor and he was really chill,” added Tiffany Sauders, a junior from Accokeek, Md.

AgDiscovery participants recommend the program to any student who is interested in learning more about agriculture beyond the classroom.

“You think that you know something, but then you’ll come here and find out that it’s totally different,” said Arbasak. “It’s knowledge that you need to know and knowledge that you’ll use even if you don’t become an agricultural major.”

“AgDiscovery just immerses you in everything that has to do with the USDA, APHIS, Health Inspection Service, all that,” added Huggis. “It’s just a great opportunity for us to see what it’s like. And just enjoy it—it’s fun.”

To learn more about AgDiscovery, check out this website:  
<http://agnr.umd.edu/prospective/Special%20Programs/AgDiscovery.cfm>