

# Newcomb Ag. Program Takes Aim

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Many miles from the nearest grocery store lies the community of Newcomb, New Mexico. Located on the Navajo Reservation, Newcomb High School is an institution full of opportunity. One unique individual providing the opportunity for students to see a future in locally grown food initiatives is agriculture instructor Augusta Ahlm. Augusta has been teaching at Newcomb High School for 2 years. She has taken the immediate initiative to find ways to revive the agriculture program which now makes an impact beyond campus borders.

After observing little to no infrastructure in place for food production or available funding within the school district, she managed to pursue and receive many in-kind donations from producers near and far to create their current agriculture science center.

It all began by coordinating labor from the chapter house summer student work program who used recycled materials to build animal housing facilities and box gardens with a hoop house for a controlled growing environment. In addition to growing produce, Ms. Ahlm later acquired several head of sheep and numerous chickens for animal protein production. Every year, the Newcomb High School agriculture program harvests

a sheep using the traditional Navajo method to offer a meal for the community in addition to offering fresh vegetables annually. Students and community members alike, enjoy and participate in the cooking demonstrations. The local senior center also benefits by receiving eggs produced by the chickens. Recently, they have installed an aquaponics systems producing a successful harvest of herbs but soon will be looking forward to adding radish sprouts and wheatgrass. They also help mitigate food waste by collecting cafeteria veggie scraps to add into their compost heap. Augusta now looks forward to working with IAC Navajo Region to find the available resources through the National Farm to School Network to help take her program to the next level.



