

Title

**Duval County Extension Cultivates Agriculture Awareness**

Project Leader

**Brad Burbaugh**

Collaborator(s)

**Dalton Dowdy, Duval County Farm Bureau**  
**Wayne Scarborough, Duval County Cattlemen's Association**  
**Allen Moore, USDA-NRCS**  
**Jan Vrogendewey, 4-H Leader**

Abstract

Food is not created at the super market, yet many school children believe that this is where there food comes from. To change this misconception, the Duval County Extension Service, in partnership with local farmers and volunteers, provided a positive agricultural learning experience to 48 local youth by means of an agriculture awareness tour. The tour entitled, "A Day in the Life: Duval County Farmers" was made possible through a grant from the University of Florida. The tour included stops at three agriculture operations: a cattle farm, a commercial nursery and a U-pick blueberry farm. The tour increased awareness of the scope and impact that the agricultural sector has in Duval County as well as demonstrated the link between farmers and our food supply.

Project Goals

The goal of the tour was to communicate the wonder of agriculture to those who have never heard our story. Moreover, demonstrate the use of science and technology in agriculture operations and provide a safe, fun and interactive learning experience to a historically under-served rural community.

Project Activities

This unique opportunity allowed students to see first-hand practices being used on commercial agriculture enterprises. The cow-calf operation provided students with a new

perspective and understanding of beef cattle. The visit included a presentation entitled, “My Cheeseburger Came from a Farm,” that help students visualize the primary and by-products we receive from cattle. To augment their education students were given a hay wagon ride to the pasture where they could touch, smell, and see the livestock they previously learned about. A great “teachable moment” was provided when participants witnessed a cow giving birth.

The commercial nursery provided students an opportunity to see the stages of plant growth from seed to sale. The owner related the needs of plants to the needs humans to help them make the connection. To supplement this connection, students used grass seed to make their very own “chia people” out of knee high stockings. The chia people will allow students to apply their knowledge of plant requirements when they return home. Students and chaperones were amazed by the diversity and sheer number of plants in each greenhouse.

The U-Pick blueberry farm focused on the different cultural practices required to farm row crops. These cultural practices helped students realize that there is an art and science to growing blueberries. Students learned the different ways that plants reproduce. Furthermore, they were given the opportunity to propagate a plant by taking a cutting from the mother plants in the field. After taking a cutting they were given soil, pots, rooting hormone to start a new blueberry plant of their own. Our horticulture agent gave them instructions on how to care for their new plant. This stop was a big hit because the farmer allowed them to eat as many blueberries as they wanted.

#### Benefactors of Awareness Program

Forty-eight local youth participated in the agriculture awareness program. The

audience was a diverse mix of students ranging in age from 7 to 15. The non-traditional audience included public school and home schooled individuals. A number of agriculture, education and service organizations benefited from the positive publicity received from the collaborative project.

### Outcomes and Deliverables

The students indicated a 95% increase of knowledge related to degree and career related options in the agriculture sector. Developed a prototype program and packaged materials for education and outreach throughout Duval County. Student friendly fact sheets that provided an overview of each farm visit. When asked, 100% of students indicated they could explain how our food makes it from the farm to our plate. The static displays will be used at the Jacksonville Agricultural Fair, career days, and science nights to promote awareness of the agriculture industry.

### Impact

The impact of this program was far reaching. The Duval County Farm Bureau was so pleased with the program they have offered to fund the Agriculture Awareness Tour for the next five years. The owner of the cow/calf operation has started an agritourism business after seeing such an interest in his farm. The director of one day school was quoted as saying, "This was a great project! There is not another project we could have chosen this summer that the children would have learned so much and had so much fun while doing it. Can we do it again next year?" Equivalent activities and program materials generally cost about \$10.00 per person at petting farms. The tour represents \$2,445 savings to Duval County Schools.