



MARCH 20, 2024 EDITION

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the Aggie Life



IT'S SPRINGTIME ON THE FARM!

Ag Fest • Plant Sale • Prescribed Burning • Real World • Miss FFA



A large delegation of students, staff, board members and John de la Howe Foundation personnel hosted a breakfast for legislators at the South Carolina State House.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY



During a whirlwind tour of the State House, among the stops our Aggies made was a visit to the Governor's Office.

The John de la Howe Foundation hosted a legislative breakfast in early March at the State House. It was an opportunity for staff and students to visit with lawmakers and show appreciation for their support of the school,

As part of the trip, Rep. Patrick Haddon recognized the students on the floor of the state House of Representatives. The students also had the chance to visit the office of Governor Henry McMaster.



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From farm visits to learning to tie fly-fishing flies to cooking, students in the Real World class explore a wide array of hands-on individualized learning opportunities.

LET'S GET REAL

Elective Class Offers Practical Learning

STAFF REPORT

A key component of getting ready for the future is learning to survive in the “real world.”

One way our Aggies can prepare for life beyond high school is with a course offered here called “Real World.” It is an elective for seniors, class offering individualized learning opportunities to grow the “complete Aggie.”

Among the topics explored are financial literacy, car maintenance, cooking, and other “adulting” skills. Each student in “Real World” completes a Farm Business Basics Certification offered through AgFirst Farm University. In addition, classes visit farms, colleges, state parks, and historical sites under the guidance of co-teachers Ms. Jennifer Brown and Mrs. Jordan Glace.

“Each year the class activities are based on the enrolled students’



Real World students recently were visited by Aggie alumni Cole Hammond and Riley Cox, who shared insights into life beyond the Governor's School for Agriculture.

interests, which makes it incredibly dynamic,” said Ms. Brown, who serves as campus librarian.

The diversity of opportunities explored by “Real World” students this year range from a visit to the Darla Moore School of Business at the University of South Carolina to delve into international business principles to learning cooking skills

and tying fly-fishing flies.

“I have enjoyed teaching Real World because it has given students the opportunity to explore unique facets of agriculture and their other life skills,” Mrs. Glace said. “It has been fun to curate a curriculum based on individual students’ post-secondary plans and interests.”

Where There's Smoke...



Mr. Hunter Morton guides one of his students in igniting a portion of the latest controlled burn near the campus wilderness area.

The Heat Is On As Students Learn About Controlled Burning

STAFF REPORT

Students in Mr. Hunter Morton's environmental and natural resources classes recently turned up the heat and enjoyed a rush of adrenaline as part of their hands-on learning.

One of the most popular units every year in Mr. Morton's classes comes as springtime approaches and students take to the woods with drip torches, rakes, shovels and other equipment to conduct a series of controlled burns.

Wearing orange hard hats, bright-yellow jackets and eye protection, these classes practice safety first as they learn the value of burning excess vegetation in the woods near our wilderness area.



"Controlled burns are important because even if students are not super-involved in forestry or wildlife, they're able to understand the importance of prescribed fire and what it does for our forests,"

said Mr. Morton. "A lot of people don't understand the impact of fire and what it does for our environment."

In fact, a prescribed burn is "one of the most beneficial things



Students donned safety gear and used drip torches to start the controlled burn while other students stood on ready with hand tools to manage the progression of the fire.

you can do for a forest," he said because it recycles nutrients back into the soil, releases seeds to the sunlight, and promotes the growth of native trees and grasses.

According to the U.S. Forest Service, other benefits of prescribed fire include minimizing the spread of pest insects and diseases, providing forage for native wildlife, improving the habitat for threatened and endangered species, and reducing the risk of wildfires by eliminating the natural fuel for those blazes.

Of course, students mostly enjoy wielding the flaming torches needed to ignite the fires and safely manage their progression.

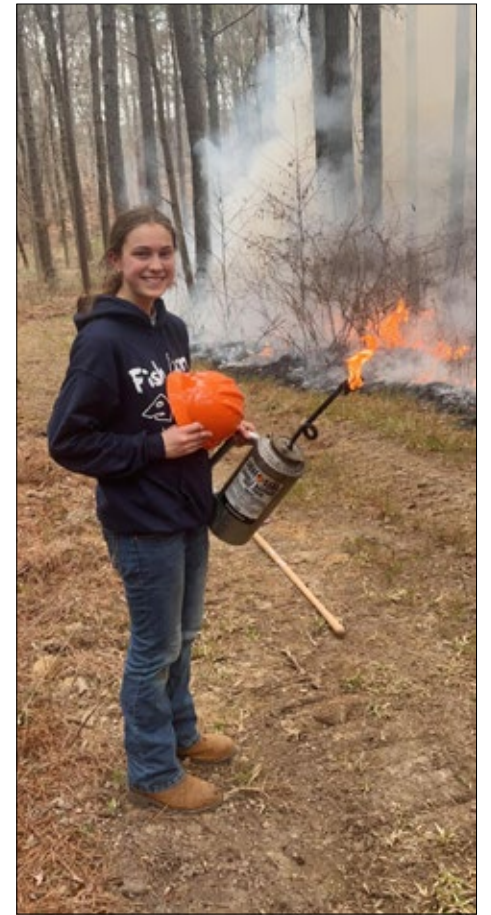
"It's really fun. It can be a little chaotic, but it teaches students how to manage it as well as the importance of doing everything the right way – prep work, with doing fire breaks and having all the people you need and the

equipment," Mr. Morton said. "It can get out of hand super-quickly, but done properly there are not many things that are much more efficient for forestry management."

The controlled burns conducted by Mr. Morton's classes help promote a better environment for the deer, game birds and other wildlife who share the property with our students.

"Fire changes your habitat, which is great for numerous species – quail, turkeys, deer," he said. "A lot of different species will use a burned area in different stages. Some use it right away; some wait for it to green up and come back. But you can't find a better tool in a wildlife manager's toolbox than prescribed fire."

For more information, visit the U.S. Forest Service website resources on the practice at www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/prescribed-fire.



Laying Down Roots

Horticulture Students Prep For Spring Sale

STAFF REPORT

With the arrival of springtime, another of our school's seasonal traditions is now on the horizon: the annual spring plant sale.

Our greenhouse is teeming with thousands of plants, and our Aggies tend to their care daily under the guidance of horticulture teacher Mrs. Kaitlyn Rhodes. The spring plant sale starts Monday, April 15 and continues until sold out.

"We'll have annuals, perennials. We'll have ferns," Mrs. Rhodes said. "We'll also have vegetables, including tomatoes and peppers."

The planning for the spring plant sale actually began last fall, when the plants were ordered. The shipping dates were staggered based on the growing season of each plant.

"Each week, the kids get a new shipment of plants," she said. "We decide what they're going to go into – if they're going into a six-pack



Mrs. Rhodes works side-by-side with her horticulture students to prepare the containers and the soil to create optimal growing conditions in the greenhouse.

or going to be sold as a single plant. The students also have to watch when the plants come in, and if they're too small, we might have to grow them in the pot they're in."

The day-to-day care of the plants is student-led and part of the horticulture class instruction. The students

even set the pricing for each plant offered at the spring sale as a way to teach agribusiness skills. The proceeds from the sale are plowed back into the agricultural program budget for future student activities and instruction.

One of the students with hands-on experience digging into the soil and

caring for the plants is Ella Taylor, who is eager to welcome local plant enthusiasts to next month's event.

"I enjoy the interaction with all the people and them coming in and being amazed with all the plants we have," said Ella, who spends three class periods almost every day in the greenhouse. "It's really rewarding to see people excited for all the hard work that we've done."

Mrs. Rhodes knows that students such as Ella harvest much more than simply plants from this twice-yearly plant sale experience.

"Horticulture is a very unknown industry to a lot of people; there's not a lot of knowledge about the greenhouse industry in general," she said.

"It gives our students the opportunity to get greenhouse experience growing the plants from seeds, plugs – we get them in all different varieties, we get them from cuttings. They get to see not only the different ways we can produce the plants but also understand the business aspect behind it."

For the best selection at the sale, get there early.

SPRING PLANT Sale Information

DATE: APRIL 15-18

- Time: Doors open at 10:00 AM and Close at 5:00 PM
- Official Plant List COMING SOON
- The price list will be posted a week before the Plant Sale!

Questions Contact:
Kaitlyn Rhodes 864-391-0421

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It's Showtime!

Largest Crowd Ever Attends School's Annual Ag Fest



Before leading his cow into the ring at this year's Ag Fest, Ty Morton spends a few moments in thought. Such introspective moments are part of livestock competition.

STAFF REPORT

The weekend dawned rainy and cool, but the weather did not deter a record number of visitors from taking in our annual Ag Fest on the first Saturday in March.

Nearly 800 livestock show competitors, family, friends and community patrons converged on the Governor's Green for a full day of family fun. The schedule included the usual fare: two rings of competition, campus tours, tasty food, arts & crafts, and even a preview of our spring greenhouse sale.

"Agriculture education is the key to everything I've done in my adult life, so I hope all of these students and guests will leave here with a better understanding of where their food comes from and an appreciation for the agriculture industry in general," said Dr. Tim Keown, our school president. "If we can help educate the general public on that matter, that's really what this whole event is about."

Students from across South Carolina and Georgia competed in dairy and beef cattle shows, a swine



Gray Gardner (left) talks with a fellow competitor just before the swine show.

show, a goat show and a rabbit/pocket pet show. Ag Fest also included an early-morning fishing tournament and a dog field trial demonstration.

In the interest of rider and animal safety, a scheduled horse show was canceled because of the

soggy conditions at the arena. Nonetheless, our annual Ag Fest has become a valued addition to the overall quality of life in rural McCormick County, according to Chamber of Commerce president Charlotte Tallent.

"One of the really big drivers in tourism now is ag tourism," she said, citing her excitement for the ongoing impact of the S.C. Governor's School for Agriculture and events hosted here on the local economy. "It brings in those tourism dollars. It helps property owners. It helps the county to stay healthy."

Among those visitors who came to McCormick County specifically for the Ag Fest was Olivia Schoentroup, a video blogger from Indiana who hosts a YouTube series called "Breaking New Roots." She and her family travel America telling stories about farm living and the rural aesthetic, and she was impressed by the fun, folksy feel of Ag Fest.

"As we started reaching out to people, I had multiple farmers tell me that we couldn't leave South Carolina without coming here," she said. "And then I had a farmer tell me about the Ag Fest. So not only would we love to tour the campus and get to know more about the school's history and story and what you guys are doing here, but I wanted to come. I'm a 10-year 4-H'er myself and an FFA member, so I couldn't pass up a livestock show."

Mrs. Schoentroup has since visited our campus a second time and produced a video profile of our school for her YouTube channel.

Overall, this year's Ag Fest continued to set the bar high for this signature springtime event, and all of us look forward to making it even bigger in 2025.



Retired board member Tom Love was honored for his service to the school with a joint State House resolution, presented by Rep. Patrick Haddon.



Ross Arthur awaits his turn in the ring during the livestock competition.



Kinley Metts opened the day's festivities with her singing of the National Anthem at the flagpole in front of De La Howe Hall.

MORE SCENES FROM AG FEST 2024



Recent alumnus Trey Haddon visits with FFA president J.D. Miller at one of the livestock tents.



Student reporter Asa Simmons interviews McCormick County Chamber of Commerce president Charlotte Tallent for a special edition of our "Carolina's Field, Forest & Water" podcast.



Mr. Hunter Morton (right) offers instructions for the first event of the day, the dog field trial.

SCAN THE QR CODE
TO WATCH OUR
SPECIAL-EDITION
AG FEST PODCAST



Aggies Ja'Davion Hicks and Austin Landreth await their turns in the show ring at the beef show.



Prior to competing in the swine show, senior Gray Gardner also offered the invocation at the welcome ceremony.

AGGIES IN ACTION



Natural resource management students from Mr. Morton's class were on-hand to observe the final days of a recent timber harvest on campus.



Mrs. Libby Templeton and Principal Mr. Greg Thompson recently accepted a commemorative poster from a representative of ICEV, listing those students who have earned a wide variety of industry certifications that have equipped them with practical skills they can take into the workforce.



A group of Aggies recently traveled to Spartanburg Community College to explore their Agriculture Department. Mr. Jason Bagwell led our students on a tour of the greenhouse and other facilities on the campus, which offers an associate's degree in horticulture among its many programs.

AGGIES IN ACTION



State Rep. Patrick Haddon welcomed a delegation of our 4-H officers to the State House in Columbia for the recent 4-H Legislative Day. Chapter historian Blake Arias (from left), reporter Lilly Fox, president Sierra Tinsley, treasurer Katie Ostergaard, and secretary J.C. Chandler attended the session.

Outstanding Aggie Achievements!



A trio of Aggies recently claimed top honors in the South Carolina 4-H Horse Project's Creative Contest Senior Division. Ella Taylor took 1st place in the Poetry Competition. Corey Davis earned 1st place in the Essay Competition, while Kelly Tasch won 2nd place in the Photography Competition.

AGGIES IN ACTION



Our school's Horse Evaluation Team recently captured second place in the State 4-H Horse Judging Contest in Camden. The team also placed second in reasons and placings. Team members are Emily White, Sara Corn, Brooklyn Glassburn, and Macy Hudson. Sara placed as a high individual. Other team members who competed in 4-H Horse Evaluation on 4-H Team 2 were Ty Morton, Emilie Cline, Lily Moss, and Kelly Tasch.



In early February, students in Mr. Morton's ENR classes completed a unit on gamebirds and culminated the lesson with a quail hunt using bird dogs, and then they learned to properly dress the birds they harvested. Later, the students were able to cook the quail they brought in from the hunt.



Elizabeth Viseth, Sara Corn and Dell Brockman competed in the Region 2 Leadership Development Event at Keenon High School. Elizabeth won 1st place in prepared public speaking and advanced to the state competition in June. Dell competed in extemporaneous speaking, while Sara competed in creed speaking.



Aggie senior Katie Ostergaard (second from left) finished as second runner-up in the 2024 Miss FFA Pageant held March 8 in Greenwood, presented by our school.

An Evening To Remember

Ostergaard Finishes Among Finalists At This Year's Miss FFA Pageant

STAFF REPORT

The 2024 Miss FFA Pageant welcomed 89 young ladies from across South Carolina to Lander University in Greenwood on Friday, March 8 to compete in this annual event hosted by the S.C. Governor's School for Agriculture.

The lineup included a contingent of Aggies. Katie Ostergaard finished as second runner-up, while Gray Gardner and Allie Gentle also finished in the Top 10. Jahira Freeman collected the highest interview score for this year's pageant.

Contestants were judged on their applications, interviews, and evening gowns. The semifinalists in the Top 10 were asked an on-stage question, and the new Miss FFA was selected from five finalists.

Ava Nimmons of the Seneca FFA chapter was named Miss FFA 2024, while Kayci Claire Wilkerson of the York FFA chapter was first runner-up.

Lindsey Morris from the McBee FFA was third runner-up, and Claire Bartley from the Saluda FFA was fourth runner-up and highest evening wear score. Emma Lusk of Walhalla FFA, Jenna Kay of Carver's Bay FFA and Reagan Smith of Walhalla FFA rounded out the Top 10.

The event could not have been possible without the support of our dedicated staff and our amazing sponsors. Ag South sponsored \$500, Livingston's Bulldogs, Chow Chows, and Yorkshire Terriers sponsored \$500, and WK Timber Corporation provided the sponsorships to award a scholarship.

Congratulations to all who participated!



Aggies were in full force at this year's Miss FFA Pageant, including contestants, faculty members, and student leaders Lyle Fulmer and J.C. Chandler.



Jahira Freeman (left) finished with the highest interview score, while Claire Bartley of the Saluda FFA (right) picked up highest evening wear score alongside the new Miss FFA, Ava Nimmons of the Seneca FFA chapter. Congratulations to all 89 contestants who participated in this year's event. (Photos courtesy Will Poteat)

Congratulations To All Of Our Aggies!