



SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 EDITION

PREMIERE EDITION



the Aggie Life

Cultivating CURIOSITY

Meet Our New Horticulture Teacher

AGGIES ON RFD-TV

HAVING A BLAST
AT OUR FIRST CLAY SHOOT

PILOT-LAWMAKER
LANDS AT DE LA HOWE



RFD-TV WELCOMES AGGIE STORIES

STAFF REPORT

The South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture has found a television home on a national network, and thus far three Aggie-themed submissions have been seen by farmers coast-to-coast.

The latest spotlight on Aggie activities aired Wednesday, September 13 on RFD-TV, a Nashville-based cable and digital network devoted to agriculture and the rural lifestyle. Our story about the visit to the National Black Growers Council's Model Farm Field Day was broadcast during the network's popular *Market Day Report* program.

Market Day Report tracks agriculture headlines and real-time commodity market prices and airs Monday through Friday.

The partnership with RFD-TV officially began on Thursday, August 10 when a three-minute segment spotlighting our campus's "Welcome Weekend" aired on *Market Day Report*. On Wednesday, August 30, RFD-TV scheduled another segment featuring a recap of our Sporting Clays Shoot and Banquet the previous weekend. That segment



AT A GLANCE

- Headquartered in Nashville, Tenn.
- Averages 62,000 viewers daily
- Daily programming includes Market Day Report and Rural Evening News

also aired during *Market Day Report*.

Katie Avant, the news director at RFD-TV, has been a strong supporter of receiving periodic submissions featuring our Aggies and projects here at the Governor's School for Agriculture.

RFD-TV is owned by Rural Media Group, Inc., and its headquarters is on Music Row in Nashville. It was founded in 1988 by Nebraska-born Patrick Gottsch, who grew up on a family cattle farm. It is estimated that 62,000 viewers tune into daily programming on the network, which also streams digitally at www.rfdtv.com.

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COMMUNITY

LAWMAKER LANDS FOR CAMPUS VISIT

Rep. Gibson Marvels At Student Presentations



STAFF REPORT

State Rep. Daniel Gibson, a retired commercial pilot and flight instructor, did not expect to get a lesson in finance when he and his wife landed – figuratively speaking, of course – at the South Carolina Governor’s School for Agriculture in August.

But that’s exactly what awaited the Greenwood lawmaker on his second visit to our rural campus. Rep. Gibson had last visited in the spring for AgFest but did not get a chance to interact much with students in their classroom settings on that first visit.

“I was so impressed with the people giving their different backgrounds and knowledge – especially with the investment side,” he said. “I never thought I was going to hear a speech about investments today...I was overwhelmed by the knowledge that they had and the things they were able to share with us. I was just blown away.”

One of the stops for the Gibsons on this second visit was the school library. There, several Aggies delivered brief talks on some of their supervised agricultural experiences (SAE) projects – including Jahira Freeman.

Jahira’s presentation centered on a project in which she extracted a bit of money from her college fund to get some hands-on



State Rep. Daniel Gibson and his wife listen to a presentation from student Gray Gardner during their visit.

experience in investing. Her future aspirations include a career in international finance.

“My father worked as a day trader for a couple years,” Jahira told Rep. Gibson during her speech, “and that really inspired my agricultural experience and what I really wanted to capitalize on.”

Gray Gardner, Blake Arias and J.D. Miller also spoke during the library visit.

Rep. Gibson and his wife, who visited en route to a luncheon in McCormick, were greeted at the President’s House by student leaders and school staff. Dr. Keown gave them a driving tour of the campus, and student body president J.C. Chandler led a tour of the Palmetto residence hall.

After the student presentations, the Gibsons received an inside-look at ongoing plans to renovate De La Howe Hall.

Rep. Gibson unseated longtime representative Anne Parks in last year’s election. He now sits on the Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs subcommittee in the House.

“I had no idea, and I don’t think anybody in South Carolina understands the great work that you’re doing here with these students,” he said. “All of you are doing an outstanding job, and we just appreciate the sacrifice that y’all made and want you to know that the people of South Carolina and McCormick County and Greenwood County are behind you.”

Cultivating CURIOSITY

Meet Our New Horticulture Teacher
KAITLYN CHRISTENBURY

By **ELIZABETH VISETH**

Kaitlyn Christenbury is the passionate and dedicated new horticulture teacher at the South Carolina Governor’s School for Agriculture.

With a family background in agriculture and her own experiences in the field, Miss Christenbury brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to her role. As the head of the school’s agricultural horticulture program, she teaches a range of engaging classes, including Introduction to Horticulture, Floriculture, Crop Production, Landscape Technology and Greenhouse and Nursery Management.

“It is my goal and vision to prepare my students to enter the world of agriculture with the knowledge they need to be successful whether that be in a college setting or a trade,” she said.

Miss Christenbury’s journey in agriculture began



Photos by **ASA SIMMONS**

at an early age on her family’s cattle farm, LYN Farms in Starr, S.C. What started as a hobby of showcasing cattle transformed into a thriving business. Although she has taken a step back from showing cattle, her siblings continue to excel on the national stage.

Miss Christenbury pursued her passion for

agriculture by majoring in agricultural education with a focus on horticulture at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Ga. Her philosophy is all about empowering her students; she aims to equip them with the practical knowledge needed to succeed in both academic and vocational pathways.

Miss Christenbury’s impact doesn’t stop there. She also strives to mold effective leaders and communicators who can contribute to society at-large.

Her own ag teachers who went above and beyond for their students ignited Miss Christenbury’s interest in agriculture.

“There aren’t a lot of people who would answer the call to help a student pull a calf at 10 at night or an ag teacher who pushed me to compete in CDE that was out of my comfort zone,” she said of those educators who inspired her to recognize the many opportunities within agriculture and instilled in her a sense of self-belief.

During her academic journey, Miss Christenbury focused on floral design, floriculture, and greenhouse management. She later gained valuable international experience during student teaching in Ireland, which broadened her perspective on both agriculture and culture.

She also spent time working at an exotic veterinarian clinic. This provided her with the opportunity to work with animals such as monkeys, raccoons, zebras, and bearded Dragons.

In her classes here at the Governor’s School for Agriculture, Miss Christenbury ensures that her students receive hands-on experience, enhancing their understanding of various facets of horticulture through real-world



Fellow ag teacher Hunter Morton jokes with Miss Christenbury at our recent clay shoot.



“
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”

engagement and a farm-to-table approach.

“My class is very research-based and hands-on,” she said.

Her student-led teaching style encourages ownership, choice, and responsibility. She believes this approach fosters effective time management and cultivates a deeper commitment to the learning process.

Beyond the classroom, she enjoys spending time with her

fiancé, engaging in creative activities such as building Lego sets and indulging in friendly Mario Kart competitions with her sister.

Kaitlyn Christenbury’s dedication to nurturing the next generation of horticulturists goes beyond textbooks and lesson plans. Her inspiring journey, hands-on teaching style, and commitment to personal growth make her an invaluable asset to our school’s agricultural mission.



WELCOME BACK TO THE FUTURE!

Here's a look back at Welcome Weekend -- and Dr. Keown was seemingly EVERYWHERE!





Students listen to a presentation by a John Deere tractor representative at the Rowesville Farm Field Day.

FIELDS OF DREAMS

Aggies Cross Paths With Alumni, First-Generation Farmers At Field Day

STAFF REPORT

In May 2022, Jacquéz Perry was among the first crop of Aggies to walk across the stage and claim the honor of being a South Carolina Governor’s School for Agriculture graduate.

These days, J.P. – as he is lovingly called by his friends – wears the colors of South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, where he has just begun his second fall semester in the college’s revitalized agriculture program. But at heart, he will always be an Aggie from John De La Howe.

“By me coming from Georgia, transferring over to the South Carolina Governor’s School for Agriculture, it was nice because I always wanted to do something and get into that kind of nature,” J.P. said. “It taught me a lot.”



Eric Jones



Jacquéz Perry

J.P. and fellow alumnus Eric Jones – who graduated just a few months ago as part of our school’s second crop of seniors – were among the young leaders in agriculture who crossed paths with a delegation of current Aggies recently in the tiny Orangeburg County town of Rowesville. All were there for the 2023 Model Farm Field Day hosted by the National Black Growers Council.

“I’m out here today to network

with other growers, socialize, meet and greet new growers that I’ve never met before so I can better myself in the ag community,” said Eric, who runs a row crop operation with his grandfather in Orangeburg. “So I can take what I learn today back to my farm and make my yields better and try something new on my farm.”

Empowering and educating young farmers – especially young and first-generation black farmers – is one of the main missions of the National Black Growers Council. The organization’s stated mission is “to improve the efficiency, productivity and sustainability of black row crop farmers.” Among the rising leaders in the NBGC is first-generation farmer Antron Williams, who hosted the Model Farm Field Day, a bus tour of three small farms tucked back



on the narrow dirt roads outside Rowesville.

“My uncle farmed right down the road, so I grew up in the shadow of that farm, and I always knew that’s what I wanted to do,” said Mr. Williams, who grows corn, soybean, cotton and wheat on his Mahogany Farms. “As a first-generation farmer, it’s not been easy. Most folks say you need to get into farming by inheriting it or marrying into it, but those of us who don’t have those options and still want to get into it, we find a way.”

Mr. Williams and other mentors from the NBGC led the Aggie delegation and other participants in a series of workshops on farm equipment, pest control, cover crops and other aspects of sustainable farming. Our students had the opportunity to interact informally during an opening reception the night before the Farm Field Day and during a barbecue luncheon after the tour.

For alumnus Eric Jones, watching De La Howe students who were underclassmen during his senior year and quite a few newly-enrolled Aggies soaking in the Farm Field Day experience was satisfying.



Our visiting Aggies were encouraged to explore the soybean, cotton and corn fields at Mahogany Farms, owned by first-generation farmer Antron Williams (above, in hat).

“I love it,” he said.

Among the organizers, Mr. Williams hopes that the Aggies and other potential first-generation farmers at the event took home a message of hope and inspiration.

“Like I told them last night at the reception, whatever your dreams are, whatever your goals are, don’t allow people to deter you,” he said, standing on the edge of a soybean field that grew from

his own dreams of becoming a farmer. “Dream it. Plan it, and then start putting your plan to work. It’s not going to be easy; there’s going to be challenges. There’s going to be ups and downs like anything else, but keep your eyes on the prize. Keep working towards whatever your goal is, whatever your dream is. Make it happen. Nobody can stop your dream or kill your dream but you.”



One of the participants in the recent Sporting Clays Shoot takes aim during the heat (literally) of the competition.

HAVING A BLAST

First Sporting Clays Shoot Raises Thousands For Foundation

STAFF REPORT

The silence was broken as the distant thunder of gunfire began echoing through the tall pines at the National Wild Turkey Federation's Palmetto Shooting Complex. On a sweltering Saturday afternoon in August, after months of planning, the game was afoot.

More than 200 outdoor enthusiasts gathered in the woods near Edgefield to take part in the first annual Sportsman's Clay Shoot and Banquet presented by the John De la Howe Foundation. The benefit featured an afternoon of clay-shooting on the NWTF's stunning 300-acre compound followed by a barbecue dinner, as



State Rep. Randy Ligon of Chester served as auctioneer.

well as live and silent auctions.

More than \$20,000 was raised toward the nonprofit Foundation's efforts to provide scholarships and other financial support for the

Aggie community.

"This is just an incredible school," said Bo Blanchard of Blanchard Equipment Company, who sits on the Foundation board

and served as the day's master of ceremonies. "Learning about agriculture, I just can't say enough about it. It's a wonderful school."

The Sportsman's Clay Shoot and Banquet festivities were organized by Stacie Smith, executive director of the John De la Howe Foundation, and school staffers Troy Cann and Hunter Morton.

"Just the support we have had from the community, from our parents, from people just wanting to buy into what we're doing at the school really means a lot – not just for the school but for the young people we're entrusted to educate," said Mr. Morton, who teaches wildlife and natural resources management. "Just very thankful and blessed for everybody who came out."

Coach Cann, the school's athletic director, noted that organizing the benefit was a team effort across the Aggie community.

"I'm very, very happy to see the crowd we had tonight," Coach said. "I'm real proud of our students and what all they've done. We didn't do it by ourselves; we had a lot of help. I'm just real proud to see people come out and support our students like this and how that's going to help them."

A portion of the proceeds from the clay shoot will support the school's wildlife education programs and the competitive shotgun team.

State Rep. Randy Ligon, wearing his cowboy hat and a shirt embroidered with the State House logo, served as the evening's auctioneer. He encouraged those with bidding number paddles to hold them up high and often during the live auction and said he was absolutely committed to ensuring the event was a success for this unique school.



Our dedicated family of Aggies -- and a few of their friends -- came out to be part of the fun at the Sportsman's Clay Shoot and Banquet.



"The mission of this school is to raise good men and women to be good producers of agriculture and to feed America and to feed South Carolina – and that's important," Rep. Ligon said. "About 99 percent of America is waiting for the other one percent to feed them, and that's these folks."

Interacting with our Aggies and staff left a strong impression on the lawmaker from Chester County.

"Great folks. They all came up and spoke to me, stuck their hands out, said 'Hello, Representative. How are you?' That means so much in today's world," he said.

Among the signature items auctioned-off during the night was a rare Jarrett Rifle so prized for its accuracy that there is a two-year waiting list for each custom

rifle produced at the gunsmith's South Carolina shop. Other auction winners left with a Clemson Tigers football helmet signed by Coach Dabo Swinney and a week-long beach vacation in Florida, among other treasures.

In all, this inaugural fundraiser for the John De La Howe Foundation set a pretty high bar for future productions.

"The first one's always hard," Mr. Morton said, "but I think this was a great first event. It's great for people to get excited about it for next year. I think is an event that will just keep growing and growing."

For more information on supporting the John De La Howe Foundation, contact Stacie Smith at (864) 391-0406.