



DECEMBER 15, 2023 EDITION





# the Aggie Life



**Happy Holidays, Aggies!**



## INSIDE THIS EDITION...

**3**

### **SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER**

*Student body president J.C. Chandler speaks at forum with Ag Secretary Vilsack*

**4**

### **MORTON WINS NAAE HONOR**

*Outstanding young ag teacher gains another national accolade*

**6**

### **HANGING A NEW SHUTTER**

*FBLA chapter launches with a wide variety of business-related activities*

**8**

### **THAT HOLIDAY SPIRIT**

*Aggies take a dose of Christmas cheer, volunteerism out into the community*

**10**

### **AGGIES MAKING WAVES**

*All across the state and beyond, students past and present are achieving success*

**12**

### **WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE**

*Community partners come together to prepare greenhouse for more growth*



# Speaking Truth To Power

*Student Body President Joins Forum With Agriculture Secretary*

## STAFF REPORT

John Chandler, our student body president here at the S.C. Governor's School for Agriculture, represented young farmers across South Carolina at a recent forum hosted by South Carolina State University.

Among the policymakers in attendance was U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. During the roundtable, Secretary Vilsack touted the U.S. Department of Agriculture's commitment to assisting small and medium-sized farmers in South Carolina.

Secretary Vilsack also announced \$208 million in federal aid to assist these farmers with paying off USDA loans.

J.C. was there because he acquired a USDA youth farmer loan two years ago to jumpstart his own cattle business.

"The only way you can tell how to help farmers is to listen to farmers," J.C. said after participating in the discussion. "My message was, with the USDA, young farmers can make it – but we need their support. We need more farmers. We need more junior farmers, so I told about the opportunities that were given to me through



J.C. Chandler meets with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in Orangeburg.

my loan, and we need to promote this loan to get more people who are interested, to give them the chance to get involved in farming."

During the forum, J.C. sat on the dais with agricultural leaders from across the Palmetto State. In addition to Secretary Vilsack, among the dignitaries in attendance were State Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers, former Columbia mayor Stephen Benjamin (who now

works at the White House as Director of the Office of Public Engagement), and Yvonne Knight-Carter, a Lowcountry tree farmer who also serves on the Board of Trustees here at JDLH.

"First of all, I was impressed with the fact that (J.C.) had applied to the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) to get funding and followed through," Mrs. Knight-Carter said. "He represented the school extremely

well, and he mentioned some of the things that go on here. I was very impressed with him."

After the event, J.C. had the chance to interact directly with Secretary Vilsack and had his photo taken with the national policymaker, who has overseen the USDA under the administrations of both President Joe Biden and President Barack Obama.

"He congratulated me on what I had done and told me I should continue doing what I'm doing, that the USDA would always support me," J.C. said with a smile, "and that he wished they could clone me because there needed to be more people like me in farming and in agriculture."

After spending three years here at the Governor's School for Agriculture, J.C. is set to graduate this spring to devote himself to his career in agriculture. He offered this advice to other youth farmers contemplating an entry into the field:

"Find ways to get active in the agriculture community. There are multiple ways to do that; it doesn't matter your age. You can always be involved. You can always find new ways to help improve agriculture – and the country."

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



Hunter Morton (center) accepts his award from NAAE officials at the organization's recent national conference in Arizona.

# MORTON WINS MORE NATIONAL ACCLAIM

## STAFF REPORT

For the second year in a row, Hunter Morton has been named one of the top young educators in America by the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

Mr. Morton was one of six teachers nationwide who were given the Outstanding Early Career Teacher Award at the 2023 NAAE Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. The award honors educators in their third to eighth year of teaching who have "exemplified great teaching methods in the classroom and have been dedicated to their career through personal and professional growth," according to an NAAE release.



Mr. Morton consistently leads students into the outdoors for enrichment activities.

"The NAAE has done a tremendous job of helping young teachers stay in their profession and learn from other teachers," Mr. Morton said. "I was honored to be

nominated back in May and receive the region award around August. It is a great program; a lot of great teachers have come through that program."





In addition to his teaching duties, Mr. Morton was one of the organizers of a recent sporting clay shoot that raised thousands for school projects.

Mr. Morton leads our school's Environmental and Natural Resources pathway and teaches a variety of courses, including wildlife and management, aquaculture, and environmental and natural resources management. He has been active in a number of other professional development programs, including the South Carolina Forestry Teachers Tour.

Among his duties, Mr. Morton led two teams to compete at this year's National FFA Convention.

Last year, Mr. Morton was recognized by the NAAE's 2022 Teachers Turn the Key professional development program.

"I would not be able to do what I do without some of the great people that I get to work with every day," he said. "Just being able to learn from people who have a ton of experience in FFA and the agricultural world, as well as people who push me to be better."

In the classroom and out in the

forest, Mr. Morton believes that all students need a warm, nurturing, and safe environment to learn and grow mentally, physically, and emotionally. According to his biography released by the NAAE, he "feels it is his responsibility to help each student realize their full potential and provide them with tools to reach their goals."

"My core philosophy really is – I always by this quote – 'people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care,'" he said. "That's at the very foundation of all my students. If they don't think that I care about them, if they don't think that I want them to do well, then they're not going to be putting in their full effort for whatever I want them to do."

With more than 8,000 members nationwide, the NAAE advocates for agricultural education, provides professional development opportunities for agricultural educators, and works

to recruit and retain teachers in the profession. The organization is based in Lexington, Kentucky.

"I'm just thankful to the good Lord above for where I'm at and being able to do something I really enjoy and work with some really top-tier people," Mr. Morton said. "Teaching agriculture, you're not in it for the money. You're not in it for yourself, but you're in it to really give those students an opportunity they may never have or have had."

Now that he has a few years' experience and has been recognized as one of the best young teachers in the nation, Mr. Morton offered this word of advice to future teachers considering careers in ag education – especially here the S.C. Governor's School for Agriculture:

"In this organization, you can do it by teaching ag, and reaching other people, and sharing your love for what you do and what you care about it, is something that's really important to me," he said.

# HANGING A NEW SHUTTER

*New FBLA Chapter Is Putting The Businss In Agribusiness*



Members of our school's new FBLA chapter have participated in a number of activities related to business and economics with an agricultural theme.

## STAFF REPORT

The S.C. Governor's School for Agriculture recently launched its first Future Business Leaders of America chapter with 16 members and two advisors.

So far, chapter members have attended the State Fall Leadership Conference in Columbia and participated in the multi-state Business Battle Competition. Blake Arias, who serves as the organization's communications officer, placed third in the state in management decision-making. Matt Maccalous, the chapter's competitions officer, placed second in the state in business basics.

Some of the club officers attended the Touch Grass

Workshop at the University of South Carolina to meet and learn from agricultural entrepreneurs from across the state.

FBLA Chapter members also visited Amplified Agriculture in Charleston and learned about innovative crop production and the potential of modern technology when applied with traditional agriculture. Chapter members attended the Augusta Symphony for their Pops Series and were treated to an amazing performance by Dee Daniels.

State FBLA president Emma Horne visited with chapter members and shared her insights into how to become community leaders and ethical citizens.

Community service is a key

component of FBLA. Some of our chapter members volunteered with the WCTEL Food Drive in McCormick. They helped build a Charlie Brown-themed float for the McCormick County Christmas Parade, and they also created wooden ornaments for the Festival of Trees at the Little River Multicultural Complex in Hodges.

Thus far, the Governor's School for Agriculture's FBLA chapter has been awarded a Champion Chapter Shaping Success Award and has been labeled a Super Star Chapter. Chapter members competed this week heading into holiday break in the December Competitive Events Tournament in areas such as public speaking, agribusiness, and economics.





STATE FBLA PRESIDENT VISIT



WCTEL FOOD DRIVE



SC TOUCH GRASS WORKSHOP



AUGUSTA SYMPHONY CONCERT

## COMMUNITY

# That Holiday Spirit

### Aggies Spread Christmas Cheer With Trees, Cookies And Snoopy

#### STAFF REPORT

All throughout the holiday season, our Aggies have been sharing their Christmas spirit around our community by participating in a wide array of events.

Miss Kaitlyn Christenbury and students from her floriculture class assisted the McCormick Historical Commission in decorating two different trees for the annual Festival of Trees and Holiday Market. The participating students included Claire Littleton, Sara Corn, Danica Crosby, Asa Simmons and Dylan Buck.

Visitors to the Dorn Grist Mill complex were invited to take a tour of the historic mill, which had been transformed into a winter wonderland. One of the trees decorated by our floriculture students represented the school with a white-frosted tree adorned with blue and white ornaments and facts about our institution. The other slim green tree was decorated with white-and-red Christmas ornaments to represent International Harvester, the farm equipment company founded by McCormick's namesake Cyrus McCormick.

"This was a wonderful opportunity for students to network with the community and show our support for everything McCormick County has done for our students," Miss Christenbury said.

A number of students stayed after school for three days in early December to bake, decorate and package cookies for the annual Cookie Walk held in downtown McCormick. The extra-large sandwich cookies were filled with butter cr me and covered in sprinkles.

The Aggies baked and wrapped about 100 cookies, which were distributed to ticketholders who came to town for the Cookie Walk.



Student bakers contributed their talents in the kitchen to the Cookie Walk.

On that same day, members of the school's new FBLA chapter rode through town on a float decorated to celebrate Charlie Brown, Snoopy and other characters from the "Peanuts" comic strip animated TV specials. In addition to wooden cut-outs of Snoopy and his feathered friend Woodstock, the float featured a life-size snowman.

Students also collected items to donate to a number of great causes at a time when the spirit of generosity reigns. The Newberry County Animal Shelter received a large collection of blankets, toys, pet food and other treats gathered during the school's "Christmas for Critters" campaign. The outreach will make the season brighter for the Newberry area's furry residents who are seeking loving homes throughout the year.

The Governor's School's student council and school culture team collected gifts and other necessities for the annual Adopt-A-Family drive. All in all, the spirit of love, peace and goodwill to all prevailed across the John de la Howe campus and throughout the region during this holiday season.





Members of the FBLA rode in the McCormick Christmas parade on the float they built.

## STUDENT SUCCESS

# AGGIES MAKING WAVES...

*Governor's School Students Past And Present Continue To Excel*



In November, a group of adventurous Aggies attended Equine Camp at the State FFA Center in North Myrtle Beach. As part of the event, they all took to the beach on horseback, including Mrs. Templeton, Ty Morton, Corey Lewis, Lilly Fox, Macy Hudson, Eli Waystack and Kinley Metts.

Floriculture students decorated two different trees for the Festival of Trees.



JD Miller and Trey Haddon, now a student at Clemson University, traveled with Mrs. Templeton to Louisville, Ky., to compete in the National 4-H Livestock Judging. They were joined by Bella Murdock, a student at Clemson University from Belton-Honea Path. Their South Carolina 4-H Team placed 27th in the nation at the North American International Livestock Exposition.



A group of Aggies traveled to Newberry to drop off items collected for rescue animals.

Recent graduates Anna Grace Cross and Trey Haddon, both now students at Clemson University, have been honored as South Carolina Farm Bureau Youth Ambassadors at the organization's Annual Conference in Myrtle Beach. They will travel the state talking about Farm Bureau to community leaders and young people impacted by Farm Bureau.







During the recent State FFA Organization's Fabulous Friday CDE competition at Piedmont Technical College in Greenwood, the team of Lyle Fulmer, Tanner Martin, Preston Patterson and Allie Taylor for placed third in the State FFA Turf Grass CDE.

# WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

## Community Partners Assist With Greenhouse Water Project

### STAFF REPORT

Springtime is fast approaching, and our campus greenhouse should be fully hydrated as things start to heat up here on the farm after Christmas.

Students, farm staff and several community partners worked side-by-side in early December to install a new water system for the greenhouse and surrounding growing space. In all, about 250 feet of water line and pump equipment were placed in the ground to help get things growing around here again.

"We're installing some equipment here that hopefully will be very beneficial for their projects," said Dr. Gilbert Miller of the Clemson Extension Service, who was joined by JDLH farm manager Mr. Eric McCall and employees of W.P. Law Inc., a Lexington-based company specializing in water installation projects. "I'm glad to be able to donate my time for a worthy project like this."

Installing the new water lines offered a valuable educational experience for students in Miss Kaitlyn Christenbury's horticulture classes, who will begin growing for the spring plant sale after holiday break.

"It's an awesome opportunity to have these volunteers out here to give these students a better understanding of how irrigation can work outside of our greenhouse and inside of our greenhouse," she said. "This gives the students an opportunity to see how when a greenhouse doesn't work we can prepare it to work for the future."

Students used shovels and motorized equipment to dig trenches for new pipe and helped the volunteers put the infrastructure into place. Dr Miller hoped these Aggies will be able to use the skills they learned in this experience for future farm projects.

"We're designing a system that will be very implementable for these students," he said.



Students in Miss Christenbury's class joined Mr. McCall and partners from Clemson Extension and W.P. Law Inc. in installing new lines at the greenhouse.

Also during the FFA Fabulous Friday competition, our very first veterinary science team competed. Gray Gardner placed sixth high individual in the state. Other team members were Emily White, Macy Hudson, and JC Chandler. More than 30 teams from across the state competed in this event.



Students in Mr. Abrams' agricultural mechanics classes recently completed their unit on electrical wiring. These and other practical skills prepare students for the world of work and everyday life after they complete their studies.

