

# HANDS-ON LEARNING

## FORT WORTH HIGH SCHOOL AG PROGRAM GROWS AS CITY STUDENTS PURSUE INTERESTS IN AGRICULTURE.

**Y**ou may think that students in a city nicknamed Cowtown would know all there is to know about agriculture. That is not necessarily the case, however, for teenagers at Fort Worth's Arlington Heights High School.

"For the most part, our program is the first experience with agriculture for our students," says Cody Davenport, Arlington Heights FFA advisor.

The school, located on the outskirts of downtown Fort Worth, is part of the Fort Worth ISD Gold Seal Program that allows students to choose courses of study based on personal interests and passions, as well as the needs of the modern workplace. Students who want to specialize in agriculture come to Arlington Heights from all over Fort Worth.

The ag program covers such subjects as livestock production, veterinary science, horticulture, aquaculture and wildlife. The keys to this winning educational program are a willingness to learn and a team of dedicated teachers.

### 450 AG STUDENTS IN 2019

"The Arlington Heights Agriculture and FFA Program has served Fort Worth ISD students for 16 years and we have seen growth each year," says Davenport. "Our program's growth and successes have been made possible by the support of many dedicated people and organizations like Lone Star Ag Credit. With our supporter's involvement, we are able to keep our program relevant and interesting to high school students while teaching about today's agriculture industry. Lone Star Ag Credit has given so much support to the Arlington Heights Agriculture and FFA Program, and we could never say thank you enough."

Arlington Heights ended the 2018 school year in May with 387 students in the ag department, and 196 of those students are currently FFA members. The ag program, which Lone Star Ag Credit has supported for many years, keeps growing, and is expected to have over 450 students in 2019.

Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE), which is required of all students, is a hands-on application of concepts and principles learned in the classroom. Students are supervised by agricultural education teachers in cooperation with parents, employers and other adults who help them to develop and achieve their education and career goals. This hands-on approach is introduced as soon as possible, so that students can determine which direction their interests will guide them toward a career.



*Members of the Arlington Heights FFA Chapter at the 2018 State FFA Convention in Fort Worth*



*Arlington Heights FFA advisors, from left to right, William Mitchell, Linsey Shands and Cody Davenport*

Livestock production and veterinary science are taught by advisors Davenport, Linsey Shands and William Mitchell. Clinics are held during the year to prepare students for competitions. Subject experts as well as other ag teachers come to judge the clinics and to provide instruction on feeding, exercising and showing livestock.

Plans are underway for new agriculture science classrooms and workspaces at the Arlington Heights campus, which the school hopes to have ready by the 2019-2020 school year.

## FISH-FARMING, FLORAL DESIGN, BEEKEEPING AND MORE

In addition to the livestock program, the ag department offers learning opportunities in several areas:

- A greenhouse and aquaponics system was built entirely by students studying animal and plant systems. An aquaponics tank for tilapia fish has created an ecosystem that sustains plant life in the greenhouse. Fishing lures made in class are tested in the aquatics pond. Last spring, over 600 plants were germinated and grown in the greenhouse. These included flowers, squash, zucchini, watermelons, cantaloupes, corn, peppers and fruit trees.
- The students are building a trailer for use at farmers markets, where they will offer items grown during the school year.
- As part of the floral design course, the new "Arrangement of the Month" club will offer floral arrangements designed by students.
- For the wildlife class, an archery curtain has been installed inside the ag shop so that students can practice their archery skills indoors throughout the year.
- Students built a quail coop on campus where they can study quail as part of the wildlife program.
- Beekeeping is a fairly new project for the department, which currently has four hives. Four more hives will be added in 2019 for honey production and honey products.
- In the Cornhole Project, students design, build and paint wooden cornhole sets. At the end of the project, they hold a cornhole tournament.

## PROUD SUPPORTER

Donations of resources and funds by Lone Star Ag Credit have helped these ag students and the ag department in many ways over the last several years. The lending co-op has:

- Invited the school's horticulture students to make table arrangements for Lone Star functions, and donated money to help the department purchase a bow-making machine.
- Provided funds for a television and TV stand as well as a laptop and sound system for students to use when practicing for showmanship presentations, speaking events, ag issues forums, advocacy and meetings with parents.
- Helped to purchase kennels, a professional wash stand and animal grooming stands for the small animal management and veterinary medicine classes.
- Provided jackets, scarves and ties for students to wear during FFA competitions and presentations.

"For students who previously had little agricultural involvement, this unique program is opening doors to career opportunities, as well as teaching the basics of food production," said Troy Bussmeir, Lone Star Ag Credit chief executive officer. "It is a very worthy program that Lone Star is proud to support."



*Space on the Arlington Heights ISD campus is used wisely for the ag department. A quail coop, built by the students for the wildlife program, is nestled behind an athletic field. Plants are grown in pots and in raised garden beds.*



*A fish tank stocked with tilapia was built by the students for their aquaculture project. The fish waste provides organic food for growing plants in barrels used as plant beds, also handcrafted by the students.*



*Wooden cornhole sets designed and built by students who wish to learn carpentry skills*

## INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

In 2010 a young Will Carter proudly showed his animal project at the Denton County Youth Fair. His steer advanced to the Youth Livestock Auction, where Lone Star Ag Credit placed the winning bid for the animal. After the sale, Carter sent a thank you note to the office, along with a photo commemorating the day.

Fast forward to 2018, when Carter walked into Lone Star Ag Credit's Denton office to apply for a loan. He was surprised when he recognized that photo from long ago proudly displayed in the Denton office!

Carter, now a Lone Star Ag Credit stockholder, worked with Loan Officer Walker Dailey to purchase his ranch in Cooke County.

"We believe in the future of agriculture, and this is the perfect example of how investing in that future pays off," said Dailey. "We are excited to do business with Will and wish him the best."



*Loan officer Walker Dailey, left, and stockholder Will Carter after closing on Carter's Cooke County ranch*

## LONE STAR AG CREDIT STOCKHOLDERS GO TO WASHINGTON, NEW YORK

It's not often that the average citizen gets to go to Washington, D.C., and visit with their senator, U.S. representative and congressional staff. But that was just the case, and more, for Hunter and Alexis Williams, Lone Star Ag Credit members from Nolan, Texas.

The Williamses were among 27 agricultural producers who were selected for the 2018 Farm Credit Young Leaders Program in New York City and Washington, D.C.

The 13th annual program took them to Wall Street to visit a brokerage firm and to the Federal Farm Credit Banks Funding Corporation. There they learned about how the sale of highly rated Farm Credit notes and bonds provides steady funds for local lending co-ops like Lone Star Ag Credit.

### An Exciting time on Capitol Hill

Next the group traveled to the nation's capital to exchange ideas with public officials. While on Capitol Hill, the Williamses discussed policy issues with Sen. John Cornyn, Rep. Jodey Arrington and congressional staff.

It was an exciting time to visit Capitol Hill, as that very day the Senate passed its version of the farm bill, setting the stage for a compromise bill of this vital agricultural and food legislation.

The young leaders also visited the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where Rural Business-Cooperative Service Administrator Bette Brand and others talked with them about USDA programs tailored for young ag producers.

The five-day program ended with a visit to Mount Vernon, George Washington's innovative farming and milling operation.

"This annual program is one of the ways we support young and beginning agricultural producers," said Troy Bussmeir, Lone Star Ag Credit chief executive officer. "It is designed to recognize and reward young Texas Farm Credit members for outstanding leadership and involvement in the ag industry."



*Alexis and Hunter Williams, left, celebrated the completion of the 2018 Farm Credit Young Leaders Program in Mount Vernon, Va., with Stan Ray, right, Farm Credit Bank of Texas chief administrative officer and president of the Tenth District Farm Credit Council, which hosted the program.*

### Cutting Horses, Farming and Range Management

The Williamses first met while showing cutting horses in their youth. Hunter ranches full time, and Alexis is a certified public accountant in Abilene.

Range management is a focus of the couple's cow-calf operation in Nolan, where they have removed invasive trees, restored native grasses and increased their stocking rate with the help of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives Program.