

A special thank you to the South Carolina Farm Bureau for sharing their county volunteer “Ag”tivity Hand Book with Florida Ag in the Classroom.



**The Florida version of this handbook was adapted by
Rebecca Ambrose.**

Florida Ag in the Classroom, Inc.

Florida Ag in the Classroom, Inc. is a non-profit educational organization, whose mission is to help teachers and students develop an understanding and appreciation of our multifaceted agricultural system and its relationship to our economy, environment, health and quality of life.

One of the primary goals of FAITC is to develop classroom instructional materials integrating state educational standards and agricultural concepts. Other goals are to identify, integrate, focus and assist all Ag in the Classroom efforts in the State of Florida; to promote a strong partnership between the total agricultural community and all educational systems; and lastly to provide a statewide professional development program for Florida pre-service and in-service teachers.

Professional development workshops are offered on state and county levels. FAITC workshops utilize the latest in educational theory and teaching methods to familiarize teachers with innovative ways to use the curricula materials with students. Cooperative learning techniques, student learning styles, and critical thinking skill development are examples of instructional methods examined. Participants receive lesson plans, related teaching materials and hands-on experience with agriculture through farm and agribusiness tours.

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How Can I Have a **Hand** in Ag Education?



County support is key to the success of ag education in Florida. Through county involvement in support projects, teachers understand that not only are there resources for teaching agricultural issues at the state level, but that there are many willing and knowledgeable people very close to home as well.

Teachers are seasoned in education, and farmers are experienced in agriculture. When combined for the purpose of helping children understand food and fiber production, this can truly be a winning team! A commonly noted concept is that teachers and farmers are the two most important and influential, yet most underappreciated, groups in our society. Working together, we will strive to ensure that future generations have a positive view of the vital role that agriculture plays in our lives, and that men and women of agriculture support the critical task that teachers have of educating our young people, the voters of tomorrow.

No matter what type of organization you are a part of, you'll find that there are suggested support projects designed to fit any budget or time frame. Counties may also generate different ideas that fit within the framework of FAITC support projects - please be sure to share your successful projects with any FAITC staff member and we'll be sure to spread the word!

The following pages outline suggested projects and details regarding implementation.

Calendar of Events related to Agricultural Education
(Suggested Use: Basic Outline for Annual Plan of Work)
You can always find a reason to celebrate!

January

National Soup Month
National Oatmeal Month

March

National Ag Week
National Ag Day
National Peanut Month
National Nutrition Month
National Frozen Food Month
National Noodle Month

February

Food Check-Out Day
National Safe Kids Week
National Cherry Month
National Grapefruit Month
National Snack Food Month
National Wild Bird Feeding Month
Responsible Pet Owners' Month



National Agriculture Day

April

Volunteer Week
Fresh Florida Tomato Month
Keep America Beautiful Month
National Lawn & Garden Month
Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Month
National Garden Week
Egg Salad Week
Earth Day
Arbor Day



May

National Egg Month
Strawberry Month
Hamburger Month
National Barbecue Month
National Salad Month
National Salsa Month
Conserve Water — Detect-A-Leak Week
Be Kind To Animals Week
National Family Week
National Pet Week
National Wildflower Week
National Teacher Appreciation Week
International Pickle Week

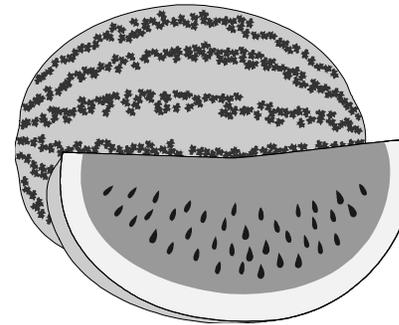
June

Dairy Month
Fruit and Vegetable Month
Turkey Lovers' Month
National Safety Week
Egg Day
Donut Day
Cheese Day
National Gingerbread Day
World Environment Day
National Applesauce Cake Day
National Iced Tea Month
National Rose Month



July

National Ice Cream Month
Beef Month
National Park and Recreation Month
National Blueberry Month
National Baked Bean Month
National Hot Dog Month
National Picnic Month



August

National Water Quality Month
National Catfish Month
School Begins

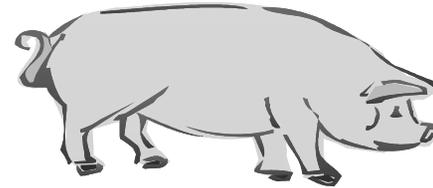
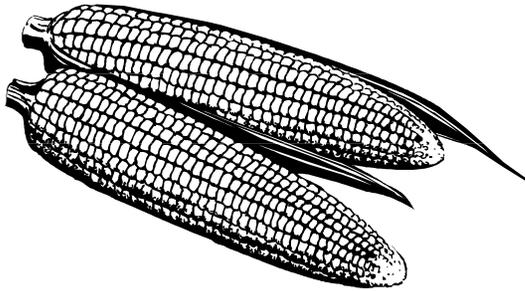


September

National Chicken Month
National Farm Safety Week
Better Breakfast Month
National Honey Month
National Rice Month

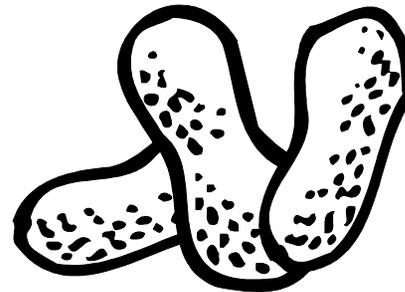
October

National Pork Month
Halloween Safety Month
Fire Prevention Week
National Apple Month
National Dessert Month
National Popcorn Popping Month
National Pizza Month



November

Farm City Week
Peanut Butter Lovers' Month
Thanksgiving Celebrations



December

Live Christmas Tree Month

Suggested Project



Hands-On Experience:

Florida Ag in the Classroom Workshop Support

Florida Ag in the Classroom currently sponsors county workshops in only approximately 25 percent of the state. Teachers and volunteers have been trained and certified by FAITC as workshop facilitators in almost half of our counties. As volunteers, you are encouraged to make county workshops an important part of your annual plan for Ag in the Classroom. Teachers participating in workshops are given free curriculum books and other resources by FAITC. A list of certified facilitators is available from the FAITC office.

If you are not a volunteer facilitator, your Florida Ag in the Classroom Director will notify you if a workshop is scheduled for a group of teachers in your county. You might choose to support this function by providing refreshments or lunch to the participating teachers. From something as simple as cookies, chips and soft drinks, to something more elaborate such as heavy hors d'oeuvres or lunch, teachers will feel welcomed and appreciative of such attention. Your FAITC county facilitators will understand that there is local support within their county for them to teach agricultural concepts, and they will also realize that farmers and farm families greatly appreciate the vital job that teachers do in educating young people.

If you are interested in becoming part of your county's facilitator team, please contact the FAITC office at 352/846-1391.

To prepare, be sure to find out:

Date and Location of the function_____

Time you should arrive to set up:_____

Time you will actually begin to serve:_____

How many participants will you need to plan for?_____

Will there be tables available, or will you need to bring a table(s)?_____

What will you serve?_____

The following list is a guideline for planning material needs. The items below may or may not be appropriate for the function for which you are preparing - you should tailor it to fit your needs.

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| Ice | Stirring Sticks |
| Cooler(s) | Beverages |
| Tablecloth(s) | Foods |
| Table Decorations | Extension Cord |
| Plates | Door Prize(s) |
| Napkins | Sugar |
| Pink Sweetener | Flatware |
| Blue Sweetener | Coffee Pot |
| Creamer | Filter |
| Coffee | |

Suggested Project

From **Hand** to Mouth:
Refreshments/Luncheons to Show Appreciation for Teachers



When developing your yearly plan of work, you might consider choosing one or two schools in your county to focus on with support projects for the following academic year. Call the school secretary or county school office to obtain a list of dates honoring education during the year, such as Teacher Appreciation Week. Select one or more of the special days to show your support for the faculty by providing refreshments or lunch for teachers in the lounge. Note: Make certain you call the school principal at least two weeks in advance to explain what you wish to do and get approval.

On the day of the event, be sure to have a representative from your group available to staff the event and explain the purpose of your “gift.” For example, “These refreshments/lunches are provided by the Sarasota County Ag in the Classroom volunteers, to thank you for helping make your students aware and appreciative of the agriculture industry in Florida.”

An easy way to provide tasty lunches is to purchase sandwich supplies, fruit, individual sized chips and individually wrapped cookies or desserts, and canned soft drinks. On the morning of the event, make and wrap the sandwiches and pack a sandwich, a piece of fruit, a bag of chips, a dessert and a drink in each individual lunch bag. Plan to make about 5 more bags than the number of staff given to you by the principal, to make sure everyone gets a lunch. A way to make the food less expensive is to have each member of your organization bring one item of the lunch.

You will also want to leave some brochures about Florida Ag in the Classroom and any published county literature for the teachers to read and use. For a list of publications and ordering information, call the FAITC office at 352/846-1391 or visit the FAITC website at www.flagintheclassroom.org. FAITC has teacher packets that you can order on the website to provide the teachers with sample materials. (A complete list of what a teacher packet contains is in the back of this handbook.)

Another idea is to have a taste of Florida breakfast. Invite state or local commodities to come into the school and serve their product. For example, the Poultry Federation may want to send a representative to make omelets for the faculty. You could also have a citrus producer serve orange juice. If you want to use a state organization, you will need to plan well in advance.

Also plan ahead to celebrate a food month. (They are listed in the front of this handbook.) Serve the faculty the food of the month and tell them that you are there in celebration of the food month and offer them ways they can celebrate with their children in their classrooms.

All of these ideas can be done either before or after school hours.

To prepare, be sure to find out:

Date and Location of the
function_____

Time you should arrive to set up:_____

Time you will actually begin to serve (if applicable:)

How many staff members will you need to plan for?_____

Will there be tables available, or will you need to bring a table(s)?_____

What will you serve?_____

The following list is a guideline for planning material needs. The items below may or may not be appropriate for the function for which you are preparing - you may tailor it to fit your needs.

- Ice
- Cooler(s)
- Beverages
- Foods
- Tablecloth(s)
- Table Decorations
- Plates
- Napkins
- Flatware
- Bags (to hold prepacked bag lunches)
- FAITC Teacher Packets

Suggested Project



Give Them a **Hand**: Honoring Workshop Participants

Each summer, educators from across the state participate in the FAITC State Teacher in-service workshop. If a teacher from your county has taken part in a summer activity, you might honor them by inviting them to attend one of your organizational meetings in the fall. (If teachers from your county attend, a list is sent to each county contact by FAITC.)

At the meeting, you might ask the teacher to say a few words about their experience at the workshop and how they plan to use what they learned with their students in the current school year. (Be sure that you mention to them ahead of time that you would like to have them say a few words, in case they need to prepare something before the meeting.) As a special thank-you for that teacher's interest in sharing agriculture through educational activities, you could recognize them with a plaque, an honorarium, a gift certificate to a local store or restaurant, or a gift basket filled with agricultural products (peanuts, preserves, honey, etc.) Be sure to invite a reporter from your local newspaper to cover the presentation.

Suggested Project



Handouts:

Spreading the Word at Other Farm-Related Functions

Classrooms are not the only place that provide opportunities to educate the public about agriculture. The following list includes events and functions that may be appropriate for setting up an agricultural education booth. Volunteers manning the booth could distribute promotional and educational items such as Burger Books, commodity brochures, etc., as well as answering general questions about agriculture.

- Fall Festivals at schools or churches
- County Fairs
- Community Kids Day Celebrations
- Roadside Produce Markets
- Local Park and Recreation Special Events

For help in designing a booth or display, please contact FAITC at 352/846-1391.

Suggested Project

A **Hand**some Display: Commodity Christmas Tree



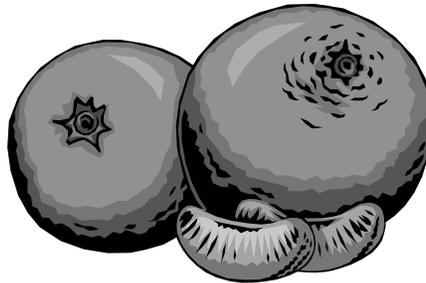
Each year, the winter holidays provide a wonderful way to introduce and remind people of the usefulness and beauty of agricultural commodities. Think of investing in a commodity Christmas tree, and displaying it in a local school, store, restaurant, or other appropriate place.

Items you will need:

- A live Florida Christmas tree (if the tree is located where you cannot water it or where a live Christmas tree is not suitable, use a flame-resistant artificial tree.)
- Small red bows
- Decoration hooks
- Rope (in place of garland)
- Commodity ornaments, which might include:
 - Brown or white “blown” eggs, ribbons glued to top, decorate if desired (To create a blown egg, insert a straight pin into one end of a raw egg, creating a tiny hole. Make another hole at the other end. Hold the egg to your mouth and blow into one of the holes. The yolk and white will come out of the hole at the opposite end. Allow the egg to dry one day before decorating.)
 - Bundles of tobacco tied in old-fashioned “hands,” attach colored ribbon
 - Floriculture tied in bunches with ribbon
 - Dried tomato rings

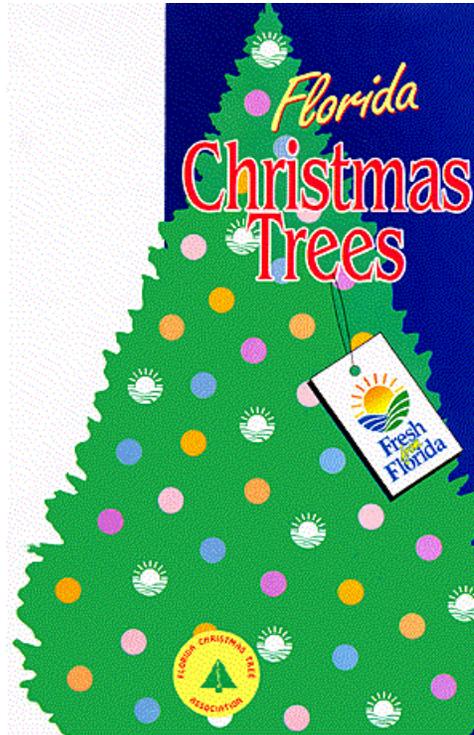
- ❑ Artificial fruits (oranges, strawberries etc.)
- ❑ Artificial vegetables (corn, etc.)
- ❑ Peanuts (You can make little peanut men with some creativity.)
- ❑ Bolls of cotton
- ❑ Plastic or wooden farm animals
- ❑ Bundles of pine straw tied with ribbon
- ❑ Miniature potted greenhouse-type plants
- ❑ Small packets of real sugar tied together with ribbon
- ❑ Small pine cones - tie ribbon to the top
- ❑ Pictures of Florida livestock or crops pasted on cardboard and cut out; tie ribbons on top
- ❑ Miniature greenhouse made from plastic straws and plastic wrap
- ❑ Outline map of Florida - glue on cardboard and cut out, use near top and front of tree
- ❑ Tree topper - use a stuffed animal representing livestock raised in Florida (beef cow, pigs, etc.) Or you can use a cowboy hat.

After making the ornaments, arrange a place and length of time for the tree to be displayed. Deliver and set up the tree, decorating it with the commodity ornaments. Consider leaving informative agricultural and FAITC brochures near the tree for people to read as they look at the ornaments.



One option that you could do with this project is to create a theme tree. You could make a tropical fruit tree, which has Florida fruit as ornaments; a dairy tree that has dairy products as ornaments; or a beef tree that has beef by-product ornaments and beef recipe cards on it.

Another great idea is to have a classroom of students make ornaments and decorate the tree. Supply the materials to the class and tell them about agriculture while they are making the ornaments. When completed, display the tree with the class name in a public area.



Suggested Project



Raise Your **Hand**:
Volunteer to Sponsor an Ag Day

Most teachers plan their year of curricula topics in advance of the school year starting, and many teach several themes throughout the year. One of the most popular themes in elementary schools is farming.

You might consider sponsoring an “Ag Day” for a local school that has several teachers who are doing a unit on farming or agriculture. Successful Ag Days require a great deal of planning, and you will want to begin making preparations as soon as possible. The following ideas are suggestions only; for more detailed tips regarding your specific situation, contact FAITC at 352/846-1391.

How long should Ag Day activities last?

Usually the actual activities last no more than half a school day. However, when planning your Ag Day, keep in mind the transportation, setup and breakdown time needed.

For Ag Days:

Visit the school and be sure you know where you will park, where you will set up, etc. If you need tables, chairs or other equipment, determine ahead of time if these will be provided and set up by the school or by you. Utilize the FAITC Make and Take Booklet for ideas on setting up hands-on stations.

Suggested Project

Help Students Get a **Handle** on Agriculture:
Host a Farm Tour



Sometimes teachers prefer to take students to the actual farm to experience what they have studied firsthand. You might consider hosting a class of students for a farm tour if you own or work at an agricultural operation or farm.

The following ideas are suggestions only, for more detailed tips regarding your specific situation, contact FAITC at 352/846-1391.

How long should a farm tour last?

Usually the actual activities last no more than half a school day. However, when planning your farm tour, keep in mind the transportation, setup and breakdown time needed.

During tours, point out the positive role that farmers and ranchers play in providing food, clothing and shelter. Emphasize practices that benefit the health of your crops, livestock and the environment. Help the students understand what you do and why it is important.

Suggested Project

Many **Hands** Make Light Work:
Volunteer as a Classroom Guest Speaker/Reader



Teachers often appreciate having a visiting “expert in the field” when teaching units on agriculture or farming. Volunteering to be a classroom resource might include reading ag-related stories to students, bringing “show and tell” tools and equipment from the farm, or simply being available to answer questions that arise when agricultural concepts are being discussed. You might want to contact the Florida commodity association representing the commodity that will be discussed and provide handouts to the class. Also, you can contact the Florida Department of Agriculture for resources and publications at www.florida-agriculture.com or by calling 850/487-8000. (The best and fastest way to get materials is to order them from the website.) For information on aquaculture and seafood visit www.fl-seafood.com or call the Bureau of Seafood and Aquaculture at 850/488-0163.



Project Tips



Projects Go **Hand** in **Hand** with Planning!

The three projects on the preceding pages, (Ag Days, farm tours and classroom visits), highlight activities you can do to support teachers who are teaching farm or agricultural units. Below are guidelines to help you in planning these events.

How do we know if teachers at a local school are planning a farm/agricultural unit?

A week or so prior to school starting call the school office and ask to speak to the principal. Inform him/her that you are a member of an agricultural organization, and that you are interested in supporting teachers who are planning to teach farm units. Briefly describe your concept of a farm tour and the type of operation you have, and ask the principal to announce your interest to the staff at the first faculty meeting. Be sure to mail or fax your contact information to the principal so interested teachers can get in touch with you.

What kinds of activities can we provide that teachers and students will find educational and interesting?

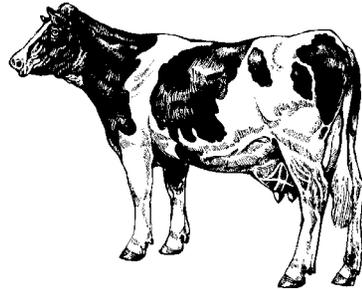
You might consider one or more of the following:

- Pointing out livestock, informing students which are male and female, and talking about similarities and differences in parents and offspring.
- Displaying and discussing some farm machinery or equipment.
- Distributing “handful samples” of crop products, such as corncobs, bolls of cotton, sugarcane stalks, fresh produce, etc.
- Discussing pictures or samples of the raw commodity you raise, and pictures or samples of consumable products made from that commodity.
- If you raise livestock, showing samples of livestock feed and talking about the products it contains and why it is nutritious for your animals.
- If you raise crops, having seeds and “peat pots” and helping children plant their own cotton seed, strawberries, etc.
- Simply being present in the classroom when the teacher has a lesson on agriculture - when questions arise, you will be the resource to answer them.
- Asking the teacher what suggestions or requests s/he might have for your presentation.
- Calling FAITC at 352/846-1391 for a list of suggested farm-related books you can read to the class.



What kinds of things should we keep in mind when working with elementary level school children?

- Safety is key - make sure students remain a safe distance away from any possibly dangerous machinery or animals. If you display any seeds with chemical coatings, hold the seeds yourself and circulate among the students to allow them to see the seeds without them having to touch them.
- Most elementary-age children have a maximum attention span of about 15-20 minutes. Be sure to have several things children can look at or touch as you talk, as hands-on activities and lots of visuals help hold a child's attention.
- If you plan to ask questions of students, wait until the end of your presentation. Children rarely answer questions in a brief manner if they have time to tell a story to go with their answer!
- Try to have some type of souvenir or handout to give to students at the end of your presentation. Whether "Ag-tivity" pages, pencils, seeds or commodity samples or bookmarks, children remember and process information more thoroughly and for a longer time if they have a reminder of the concepts presented.



- **For Farm Tours:** Most elementary classes average about 22 to 30 students. You may find it helpful to divide your tour into two sections. Have one half of the class tour the first part while the other half tours the second part, then switch. This method requires at least two farm tour guides - you will need to coordinate well in advance regarding who will tour the students and what you will tell them.

Is there anything we need to inform teachers and principals about in advance?

- As soon as you decide what you will present to the students, give an overview to the teacher and make sure both of you are “on the same page” as to what is expected.
- Make clear to the teacher that you expect them to remain with their students during your entire presentation. Your focus is to share agriculture with students; the teacher’s role is to manage student behavior, as well as to listen to your presentation so they can properly follow up with students after you leave.
- If you will be showing livestock or large farm equipment, remember to display these items in the safest manner possible for students.

- **For Ag Days at the school:** Visit the school and be sure you know where you will park, where you will set up, etc. If you need tables, chairs or other equipment, determine ahead of time if these will be provided and set up by the school or by you.

- **For Farm Tours:** Determine if the class will visit during a time when they would normally have a meal or a snack. Teachers may like to plan for students to bring bagged lunches or snacks. If so, plan to provide picnic tables, produce crates, carpet squares or other seating accommodations, as well as a large trash receptacle.
- Have the teacher visit your farm ahead of time and inform them where to park, where to assemble and how to divide the group, etc. Ask the teacher to make sure students wear nametags so you can call them by name. Provide written directions for the teacher to give the bus driver, and always include your phone number.

How can we make the most of our efforts at providing an excellent Ag Day, farm tour or classroom speaker?

Children and animals make for wonderful media coverage, and friends of agriculture should always take advantage of opportunities to portray a positive image of agriculture in the media. Call your local media and inform them of your plans. Invite a reporter to cover the event. If a reporter is not available, make sure to have a camera on hand to take pictures that could be sent with a news release to the local newspaper after the event. For assistance in writing a news release and for tips on taking pictures newspapers can use, call FAITC at 352/846-1391.



How long should classroom resource activities last?

Usually a lesson or story time ranges from 30 minutes to two hours.

Suggested Project



More Fundraising Handiwork:

Try a Miniature Golf Tournament Fundraiser

To raise funds for your county or Ag in the Classroom programs, you might choose to sponsor a miniature golf tournament in your local area. Select several volunteers willing to assist with the project. Locate a miniature golf course in your area and advise them of your project, then you might want to work with the course owner or manager to set a date and time (preferably a Saturday around lunchtime) that you can reserve the course for about two hours.

Negotiate a price per person with the course that would include one round of golf and lunch (most courses have concession stands; a price negotiated lunch might include a hot dog, a large drink and ice cream cone.) From this per person price, add a given percentage, which will be your “profit” - this will go to the Ag in the Classroom program you choose. The sum of these will be the ticket price for participants.

To raise further funds, you might solicit sponsors at various levels (\$20, \$50, \$75, \$100) whose names you can mention at your organization’s meeting or in county newsletters. If your profits will be donated to a non-profit organization, sponsor donations are tax deductible.

To publicize the event, print a flyer with the following information:

- Name, title and date of tournament
- Information about the organization that will receive the proceeds
- Registration panel with ticket cost, participant information and registration deadline
- Information about how to become a sponsor

You may also want to:

- Contact local newspapers and radio stations and invite them to cover the event.
- Designate two players' brackets. (Over 16 and Under 16)
- On the day of the tournament, players will keep their own scores and turn in scorecards to volunteers at the end of their rounds.
- Be sure to have two trophies to present to the winners in each category. (Person with the lowest score.)

Other fun agricultural fundraisers include:

Cow Chip Bingo - Divide a field up into a grid using paint, flour or chalk. Sell spaces of the grid for a couple of dollars each. Put a cow in the field. The space that the cow "does her business" on is the winner. Give the winner a percentage of the total money collected, and the rest is "profit." This is a fun way to raise money and can be done as a part of another fundraiser, like a silent auction or dinner.

Golf Tournament - Use the same standards as the miniature golf tournament fundraiser, but have it on a regulation golf course.

Give Yourself a Hand!

**Thank you for supporting ag education and
Ag in the Classroom in your county.**

Your efforts show educators that they are appreciated and supported as they help their students understand and value your industry, Florida agriculture. We must keep in mind that today's students are tomorrow's consumers, voters and legislators. Educating students about the positive aspects of agriculture helps us to ensure a continued viable future for this essential industry.



Florida Ag in the Classroom Materials

Educational Curriculum:

- Project Food, Land and People (Pre-Kindergarten through 12th grade; workshops available.)
- Keeping Florida Green (6th through 8th grade; workshops available.)
- Life From the Land Newspaper (4th grade)

Teacher packets contain:

- Educational Resource Guide to Florida Agriculture
- FAITC Gardening for Grades
- FAITC Make and Take Booklet
- FAITC Informational Brochure
- FAITC Life From the Land Newspaper
- Materials order form
- Seasonal materials (as appropriate)
 - FAITC Guide to Grants and Grant Opportunities Booklet
 - Teacher grant applications
 - State teacher workshop registration form

To order these materials or to get additional copies of this handbook, visit the FAITC website at www.flagintheclassroom.org.