The USDA Junior Agriculture Ambassador Program prepares tomorrow’s leaders by providing high school students with the opportunity to intern with the USDA APHIS (Animal, Plant, Health Inspection Service) in Miami, FL. Ambassadors are selected based on their academic excellence, interest in science, and demonstrated leadership qualities.

The program is designed to expand students’ knowledge of the importance of public service, provide educational and professional experiences and increase student’s awareness of career opportunities with the USDA.

Funding is provided by the USDA Hispanic-Serving Institutions National Program and managed in partnership with Miami Dade College and Miami-Dade County Public Schools Division of Career and Technical Education.

Participants Taylor Barrocas (Coral Reef Senior High School) and Mary Roy (Felix Varella Senior High School), were mentored by Biotechnician, Margarita Dotres. Their responsibilities included maintaining and digitalizing the station’s specimen collection. Francisco Diaz (William H. Turner Tech Senior) was mentored by Nematologist, Fred Zimmerman. His responsibilities included collecting information on the Giant African Snail. The culmination of the 6 week internship consisted of a 1 week leadership experience at USDA Headquarters in Washington, DC where the three students had an opportunity to network and present their research to the Secretary of Agriculture and members of his Cabinet.

**Upcoming Events:**
- Fall Preliminary Testing Day 11/18
- Middle School Leadership Conference 12/5
- Sub District Competitions 12/11
- District 12 Retreat 12/12

The Miami Dade County Youth Fair proudly announces the selection of its 2014-2015 Agriculture Ambassador Team: **Ashley Franco (Lead)**, **Arianna Balceiro (Vice Lead)**, **Anay Ravelo (Secretary)**, **Tresha Vincent (Reporter)**, and **Xavier Miranda (Treasurer)**. Applications are now available for middle school students to participate in the Jr. Agriculture Ambassador Program.

This elite group of students serve to bridge the gap between our urban community and Miami’s agricultural roots as they serve as student leaders at the Miami-Dade County Youth Fair and Exposition. Fair Ambassadors will engage in ASK ME talks and support the Howdy Program, which acquaints 3rd graders with Agriscience topics and provides tours of exhibits within the Agriculture Tent at The FAIR.
Students at South Dade Senior High School were recently visited by Congressman Ted Yoho, Florida’s Representative on the House Agriculture Committee in Washington, DC. During his meeting with students and Agriscience Teacher Steve Greer, Representative Yoho, had an opportunity to see first-hand student applications of technical skills learned in the agriscience program and to hear the student’s message of how important it was for him to continue advocating for the Agricultural Industry, as well as, funding for the continued support of secondary agriculture education programs in Florida and across the nation.

Students in the Agriscience Program at Coral Reef Senior High School explore the field of Agricultural Biotechnology by learning about non-traditional propagation methods of plants and husbandry of small animals; engaging in research partnerships with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); summer internships; and conducting research on rare and native tropical plant and animal species impacting the industry. Through their participation in the National FFA Organization, students have additional opportunities to develop their leadership and professional development skills.

On September 10, 2014 Coral Reef FFA Chapters held their Annual Officer Installation Ceremony.

On October 10-11, 2014 Coral Reef FFA Chapters held their annual camping retreat at Castellow Hammocks Park.

Ms. Nyree Washington is the Agriscience Teacher at Coral Reef Senior High School.
The concepts of ‘sexual’ and ‘asexual’ reproduction are no longer unknown concepts to the students in Redland Middle School’s Agriscience Magnet Program. The students recently completed a unit of study on the different methods of propagating plants, and put their newly acquired skills into action as they re-populated the inventory in their nursery by growing new plants from seeds, hardwood cuttings, and rhizome separation. The students definitely ‘bought-in’ to the lesson because they sold most of the plants in their nursery and have earned over $800 for their FFA club as a result. In order to continue to have plants listed for sale, and to avoid the ‘start-up’ costs associated with purchasing new plants, or ‘starts’, the students found a way to replenish their supply the old-fashioned way: using what nature has already provided. After all, plants have been reproducing for millions of years on their own without the intervention of humans.

(above) Students are harvesting the seeds of Phoenix roebelenii (pygmy date palm) to be germinated in the mist house prior to transplanting. They estimated that there were 40,000 seeds in all, as a result of counting out 500 and weighing them with a gram scale.

(above and below) Ophiopogon japonicus (mondo rograss) is propagated by rhizome separation. Being the biggest seller in the nursery, it is always in ‘short supply’. Luckily for the students, they find it easy to divide.

(above) Agriscience students propagate Everglade native Callicarpa americana (American Beautyberry) using the ‘hardwood cutting’ technique.

Mr. Wayne Worthley is the Agriscience Teacher at Redland Middle School.
ACADEMY OF VETERINARY SCIENCE
AND AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY
(VSAT)

ACADEMY GOAL: The goal of the Agriscience Academy at William H. Turner Technical Arts High school is to prepare and guide students toward a career. The program focuses on learning by working with animals, developing an aquaculture program, using various methods to grow plants including hydroponics, tissue culture and hydro-stacks and continue to explore new concepts in plant and veterinary science using new innovative approaches to hands-on laboratory learning. Public speaking, field trips, local and state competition are also very important part of this Turner Tech’s Agriscience Academy.

ACADEMY OVERVIEW

VSAT is a National Career Academy Coalition Model. The academy utilizes animal, plant and environmental science integrated with subject area competencies to provide a course of study that will be academically challenging and rich in application. The academy focuses on hands-on experience to assure that all students achieve at their highest potential.

The Environmental Resources leads to a Bachelor of Science degree, Master of Science degree or Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) at major universities. Graduates can pursue jobs in horticultural sales and marketing at garden centers, as landscape specialist, groundskeepers and landscape gardener, research assistant, plant propagator, laboratory assistant. Graduates can also start their own business.

The Veterinary Assisting Program leads to an Associate degree in Veterinary Science from a community or technical college. Our students can also pursue a Bachelor’s degree, Master’s Degree, Ph.D. or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) at major universities.

Turner graduates can be employed in the pet stores and with other private or governmental organizations as an animal caretaker. They can work with zoo animals, wildlife, or assist the Veterinarian. There are also entry-level positions in federal, state and local governments that employ individual with veterinary assisting skills.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL STUDENT ORGANIZATION (CTSO)

The National FFA Organization is the CTSO that provides leadership and training. The Organization affirms its belief in the value of all human beings and seeks diversity in its membership, leadership, and staff and provides opportunities for students to showcase knowledge and skills learned in Agriscience Education.

Mr. Everal Miller, Academy Leader and Senior Agriscience Teacher at William Turner Technical Arts High School

Mr. Yves Polynice has joined the Ag Family at Turner Tech this year. We look forward to his contributions to this World Class program.
Coconut Palm K-8 Academy’s (CPA) Service Learning initiative serves to permeate the school’s Agriscience Engineering Magnet Program throughout the school community. Upper academy students (6th–8th grades) develop lesson plans and presentations that relate to Florida’s agriculture and agribusiness industries to share with lower academy students (K-5th grades). Currently, service learning projects are focused on encouraging the entire school to adopt the Green Pledge for the Green Schools Challenge. The Green Pledge encourages students to recycle and conserve energy and water. Past, service learning initiatives have included encouraging healthy eating, proper nutrition, knowledge of farm to table concepts, reduce pet euthanasia, and encourage more responsible pet ownership. These projects build the students oral and written communication skills, leadership skills, and allow the students the opportunity to practice planning and organizational skills.

Submitted by Atisha Jackson,
Agriscience Teacher at Coconut Palm K-8 Academy

Hialeah Gardens High School’s (HGHS) Agritechnology and Veterinary Assisting Programs are taking advantage of the social media revolution. Through the use of Instagram, they are keeping students and the local community informed of their FFA Chapter’s projects and programs. The Agritechnology and Veterinary Assisting Programs are under the Biomedical Academy at Hialeah Gardens High School. The program offers courses that prepare students in education and careers in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

In 2012, the students in the Program and FFA Club decided to start an Instagram account. As a result, they developed the Gladiator Ranch Instagram social networking site. The site provides current information on what is going on in both programs and the FFA club. Through Instagram, information has been spread faster than any other medium of advertisement. Its effectiveness is also helped by the fact that a large percentage of our students are already using Instagram to communicate.

Through our Gladiator Ranch Instagram, our student members have been able to give parents and other students insight into what goes on in our program. Followers are able to see group projects and individual student work as well. Students in the class that follow us on Instagram can share educational tips, learned techniques, and new experiences that occur in the classroom and land labs with students that would normally not see or know about our class.

Gladiator Ranch Instagram has also served as an articulation tool, allowing students from Hialeah gardens Middle School and other feeder schools to see the cool things our program has to offer.

The communication strengths have increased to the point that students and parents who have never heard of the Agritechnology and Veterinary Assisting Programs are now visiting our land labs and wanting to get involved in our program.

Ms. Selene Castillo is the Agriscience Teacher at HGHS
Coral Reef Senior High School Agriscience Program is preparing the next generation of leaders in agriculture. Agriscience Juniors Nicholas Irusk and Lourdes Stagnaro participated in the 2014 Ag Discovery Program sponsored by USDA’s Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Ag Discovery is an outreach program to help teenagers learn about careers in plant and animal science, wildlife management, and agribusiness. The program allows students to live on a college campus and learn about agriculture from university professors, scientists, and administrative professionals who work for the U.S. Government in a variety of fields.

Nicholas Iruska attended the 2-week program at South Carolina State University where he learned the business aspects of protecting plants and animals while exploring careers in agribusiness. He also gained exposure to veterinary medicine, plant pathology and physiology, chemistry, marketing, public affairs, and computer science.

Lourdes Stagnaro attended the 2-week program at Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University (FAMU) where she worked with a variety of animal species to help them better understand and refine their career paths.