



Florida Agriculture
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Teachers, agriculture leaders learn from each other at national conference

FORT LAUDERDALE – Nearly 400 teachers and agriculture leaders shared stories, ideas, lessons and materials at the 2011 National Agriculture in the Classroom Conference “Discover Education’s Hidden Treasure: Agriculture” held June 22-25 in Fort Lauderdale.

Conference goers came from nearly every state, giving teachers a well-rounded view of agriculture in America. Several attendees came as far away as Canada, Alaska and even American Samoa.

The national conference, an annual event that is hosted by a different “Agriculture in the Classroom” state each year, gave teachers a comprehensive look at agriculture and showed teachers how they can use agriculture to engage their students in almost every subject area, from math and science to language arts and nutrition.

In addition to workshops and traveling tours to local ranches, nurseries and packinghouses, there was an exhibit hall with displays from across the United States that showcased the many organizations that work together to help teachers bring agriculture into their classrooms. Teachers left the conference loaded down with stacks of lesson plans and materials to bring back to their classrooms.

A Fresh from Florida Grown Zone was stocked with fresh samples of Florida agriculture examples, including starfruit, avocados, orange juice and cheese. Two chefs helped prepare salads, guacamole, watermelon salsa and smoothies for conference goers to taste Florida agriculture. The Watermelon Queen was also on hand, passing out juicy slices of Florida watermelon.

Jack the pirate and his band of pirates brought a touch of debauchery and excitement throughout the week, with the pirates showing up at award ceremonies, meal functions and other events at the conference.

Several speakers, including Dennis T. Avery and Elizabeth Wolanyk, addressed misconceptions about food in America, while Paul “Cowbone” Buster spoke about Florida from a Native American viewpoint.

Perhaps the most touching moments of the conference came during the awards ceremonies that honored several dozen teachers for their outstanding dedication to bringing agriculture into their classrooms. Videos featuring the six national teacher winners and a national volunteer winner brought both laughter and tears to the audience.

Another video – *Agriculture Across America* – showcased the top commodities in each state, along with agriculture facts about each state. The video was created for teachers to use as a teaching tool to show their students the importance and variety of agriculture in America. Lesson plans are being developed to go along with the video, which was used a fundraiser for the National Agriculture in the Classroom Consortium. The video is still available and can be ordered by contacting Holiday Griffin at 352-846-1391.

Next year's national conference will be hosted by the Colorado Foundation for Agriculture and is set to be held June 19-22, 2012 in Loveland, Colorado.

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For more information on Florida Agriculture in the Classroom, visit:
www.flagintheclassroom.com

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