

2022-2023 Annual Report



Virginia Foundation for
Agriculture in the Classroom

Connecting Children to Agriculture

Connecting with the Executive Director

Dear AITC Supporter,

This publication is a celebration of your generosity and what it has helped Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) achieve during fiscal year 2022-2023. Please take a moment to read these pages and celebrate with us another successful year for Virginia AITC. We are so appreciative of what your support has allowed this program to accomplish.

The need for education about the importance and impact of agriculture has never been greater. AITC continues to educate teachers, students and the general public, and our donors make this work possible. Thousands of children and educators in this state are more knowledgeable about agriculture because of you. *Thank you!*

During this year, we have reached a record breaking 27,118 educators through our professional development sessions, newsletters, and C.A.R.E.S. packages, awarded 71 school grants, read to over 72,000 children as part of Ag Literacy Week, recognized Virginia's top teachers, and provided communities with outreach resources. We have continued to forge new community partnerships with our Ambassadors program and offered new trainings for educators including an Eastern Shore bus tour. As a result of all these efforts, more than 609,000 children have benefited from our programs.

Agriculture in the Classroom can never say thank you enough to each individual or organization that supports our agriculture education programs and initiatives. Please know, we cannot do what we do without you!

If you believe that today's children should grow up with an understanding and appreciation from where their food and fiber comes, please consider remembering AITC this upcoming year and keep us at the top of your donation list. We hope you will help us continue to promote agriculture literacy in Virginia and "connect children to agriculture".

With thanks,



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Executive Director



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Connecting with Children

School Grant Program

Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom awarded 71 grants in 44 Virginia localities for the 2022-23 school year. The grants provided 25,000 youth in urban and rural areas with agricultural experiences related to gardening, animal agriculture, nutrition, STEM and leadership development. These grants and the projects they support also helped youth gain a better understanding of food production and career opportunities in the agriculture field.

“Urban gardens, hydroponics and embryology are the most popular project topics as schools and communities seek in-person learning activities,” said Tammy Maxey, Virginia AITC executive director. “Youth from preschool through high school in public and private educational settings have an opportunity to learn about a variety of agricultural concepts. Congratulations to the schools, centers and 4-H chapters across Virginia that were selected.”



Teacher Testimonials

Amy Goodyear of Heritage High School in Loudoun County lead eleven teams in the Plant the Moon challenge, a global science experiment and research challenge to examine how vegetable crops can grow in lunar soil. Teams used real soil simulant from the University of Central Florida's CLASS Exolith Lab to design and conduct experiments to grow crops for future long-duration missions to the lunar surface. As part of this experience, students learned how soil is formed here on Earth and how important soil formation is to the successful growth of plants. In addition, they learned scientifically relevant research procedures and how to keep plants healthy and alive. The AITC Grant made it possible for these students to have an authentic research experience as a part of their Research Biology course.

PJ Shepherd lead over 1,000 3rd and 5th Graders in Southside VA at the Southern Piedmont Research Station at their Agriculture Awareness Days. Students were provided with hands-on lessons about agriculture including, strawberry DNA extraction, animal cell models, apple earth, and making oobleck. One teacher that participated commented, "The information gained by the students is priceless and makes me as a teacher grateful for outside resources and programs like this Ag Day".

Using an AITC grant, Taylor Estep of Lebanon High School taught her students how to preserve food with canning. "My students were able to can jelly in the classroom with items purchased from an AITC grant," shared Estep. "Each student was able to take home a small jar of jelly to share with their family and friends. This grant allowed them to experience canning foods through a hands-on experiential process."

Collette Bahn of Scottsville Elementary School had her students create their own farm plans (complete with their own commercial), grow their own garden, read agriculture literacy books, and visited a working farm to pick strawberries. She wrote, "Our students were beyond thrilled to create their own farm plans. They had such a wonderful time experiencing agriculture and learned so much about buying/selling and goods/services, as well as the importance of produce as a natural resource."



Elizabeth Mann of Carrollton Elementary School taught students about the chicken life cycle and where their food comes from. She shared, "Students were shocked to realize several things: 1st-chicken nuggets come from chicken & we are eating chicken that use to be little chicks like the ones we hatched. 2nd- they learned about the life cycle of a chicken and not all eggs hatched." Her students learned how to candle eggs to track the growing progress and that farmers grow chickens for a variety of reasons whether to sell their eggs, or to raise them for future meat. Students checked on chicks daily to see how they grew and changed over time but also to see if they had enough food and water and to change out the bedding.

600,309

CHILDREN WERE CONNECTED
TO AGRICULTURE THROUGH
AITC PROGRAMMING &
INITIATIVES

Connecting with Educators

Franklin County Teacher Receives National Honor

Jennifer Hatch, a seventh-grade teacher at Benjamin Franklin Middle School in Rocky Mount, is among recipients of the 2023 National Excellence in Teaching About Agriculture Award.

Hatch, who previously was named the Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom 2023 Teacher of the Year, was one of nine teachers across the country to receive the national honor. The awards were given by the National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization, U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Farm Credit.

Each year the organizations partner to honor teachers in pre-K through 12th grade for innovative ways they are using agricultural concepts to teach reading, writing, math, science, social studies, STEM, STEAM, and more.



“These outstanding teachers recognize that agriculture also is a perfect foundation for teaching biology, chemistry, climatology, math and literacy, in ways that any age or level of students can understand, value and apply to their daily life,” said Dr. Dionne Toombs, acting director of USDA-NIFA, which provides federal leadership and annual funding for NAITC. “When a student makes that real-life connection to the lessons and activities their teachers share, students continue to learn and value the true meaning of those lessons when they leave the classroom. Innovative teachers like these are often responsible for awakening a student’s love of learning, nature and science.”

Hatch is a mathematics teacher whose goal is to educate her students on the importance of where their food comes from and to demonstrate real-life applications of math in farming. She and her students established a hydroponics garden in their classroom, where they grew lettuce, basil and cilantro year-round. Applying their math skills, Hatch’s students gathered data, recorded plant measurements and growth rates, and performed data analysis throughout the growing process.

They also received farm-to-table experiences by preparing their classroom-grown produce into meals. They budgeted and shopped for additional ingredients and calculated recipe proportions for the number of servings needed.

“Jennifer Hatch opens the eyes of her students to the many opportunities in agriculture through integrating mathematics and hydroponics,” said Tammy Maxey, Virginia AITC executive director. “Her students are experiencing the application of math concepts while truly becoming budding agriculture engineers and horticulturalists, which will spur career interest and help these secondary students begin to set their sights on future careers.”

As Virginia AITC Teacher of the Year, Hatch received a scholarship to the 2023 National AITC Conference in Orlando, Florida, in June where she was honored for her national recognition.

AITC Keeps Teachers Motivated & Knowledgeable

Trainings provide educators with curriculum, resources and knowledge to bring agriculture to life for their students.

Over 20,000 educators received professional development and classroom resources including our C.A.R.E.S. kits, Pizza Garden kits, and *Virginia Grows* newsletters sent each semester. Innovative lesson plans and standards-based options continue to be utilized at no cost along with an interactive Virginia map that focuses on the geologic regions and the associated farms there. Ag24/7 poster series, Summer Professional Development and new Eastern Shore bus tour further connected teachers to agricultural experiences that allowed them to better understand the industry they then present to students through the lessons.



Connecting with Volunteers

Ag Literacy Week, Biggest Volunteer Opportunity of the Year

Thousands of Virginia students are a little more knowledgeable about where their food comes from thanks to farmers and friends of the agriculture community.

More than 1,000 volunteers read to over 60,000 students during Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom's annual Agriculture Literacy Week, March 13-17. Participants in the event read AITC's 2023 Book of the Year, *I Love Strawberries* by Shannon Anderson.

The book follows strawberry-loving Jolie as she grows her own fruit from seedling to table with help from her faithful rabbit sidekick, Munchy. The humorous book—colorfully illustrated by Jaclyn Sinquett—gives readers a peek into everything involved as the delicious berry is cultivated.

More than 2,900 books were donated to classes across the state, including public and private schools, community clubs and local libraries, said Tammy Maxey, AITC executive director. "It's inspiring to see the entire farming community join forces to provide children with agriculture's story in 2023," Maxey said. "Children had an opportunity to meet a farmer or community leader to learn about agriculture and its value to everyday life."

Many of the readings were accompanied by hands-on activities. Carter Humphries, a Virginia Cooperative Extension agent in Henrico County, read to students at several county schools with help from local FFA students. After the readings, some classes planted their own herbs while others learned how to extract strawberry DNA. "They thought it was the coolest thing ever!" Humphries exclaimed. "As a mainly suburban area, many of our youth aren't exposed to agriculture so this project is just one small way we can connect agriculture to the life skills and science standards students are learning in the classroom."

Agriculture Literacy Week is AITC's largest educational event and provides a fun, engaging way to increase children's knowledge of farming and where their food comes from—and the importance of agriculture.

"It amazed me that the youth, even the older ones, didn't know what the term 'agriculture' meant," Humphries added. "Even though we're only with them for a short amount of time, we hope the lesson sparks some ideas, discussion and interest to learn more."



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Volunteer readers included Virginia's first lady, Suzanne Youngkin; Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry Matthew Lohr, members of Virginia's legislature; county Farm Bureau leaders; employees of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Farm Credit and F&M Bank, and FFA and 4-H club members.

21,986

EDUCATORS RECEIVED
RESOURCES, & PARTICIPATED
IN PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT

Connecting with Volunteers

Volunteers Driving Fundraising

The Virginia Farm Bureau Federation Women’s Leadership Committee’s John Deere Gator Raffle in 2022 was a resounding success, with 3,200 tickets sold and more than \$60,000 raised. All proceeds were donated to Virginia Agriculture in the Classroom, which helped connect thousands of youth with agricultural learning and hands-on experiences.

“I was overwhelmed by the response and number of tickets sold,” said Faye Hundley, chair of the Women’s Leadership Committee. “It exceeded all my expectations, and we could not have done it without the support of our Farm Bureau members and our sponsors.”

Mandy Toth of Blackstone was the winner of the John Deere Gator 590M, valued at over \$13,000. The raffle was sponsored by James River Equipment and Virginia Tractor, and the winning ticket was announced during the 2022 VFBF Annual Convention held at The Greenbrier.



Pictured: Brandon Bolling from James River Equipment, Burkeville; winner, Mandy Toth of Blackstone; Jennifer Campbell from Virginia Tractor; and Faye Hundley, VFBF Women’s Leadership Committee chair

Volunteers Make an Impact

Community outreach is one of the most important efforts Agriculture in the Classroom supports. Last year, volunteers shared an agricultural experience with 145,552 children at more than 100 events including fairs, festivals, farm days, and career days. These community settings allow children and families to learn together. Face-to-face interactions connect children to the incredible world of agriculture that is around them every day.

Through a supply of FREE resources, volunteers have a bank of educational materials that feature Virginia agriculture specifically for their use. From trademark banners about agricultural careers and Virginia’s commodities to an assortment of placemats, bulletins, brochures and activity pages, bridging the agriculture education gap is as easy as requesting our materials.



Connecting with Special Events



Valley Clay Shoot

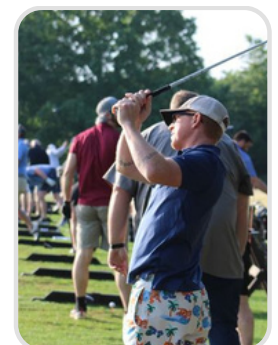
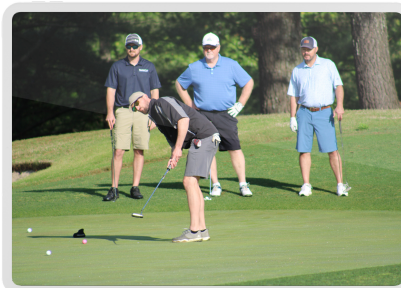
In March, sportsmen took aim in support of agriculture's future. Teams at the Flying Rabbit Sporting Clays in Mt. Crawford raised over \$20,000 for program advancement. Special thanks to all participants and sponsors for a great event!

New for 2023-24 will be our Eastern Virginia Clay Shoot on November 6 at Old Forge Sporting Clays in Providence Forge. Be on the lookout for information on both the Valley Shoot and the Eastern Virginia Clay Shoot.



Record Breaking Golf Tournament

The 26th Annual Golf Tournament was held on May 8th at The Dominion Club in Glen Allen. A record number of teams participated, along with many sponsors. The tournament was a huge success netting over \$48,000 to support education and outreach. Thanks to all who made this such a success!



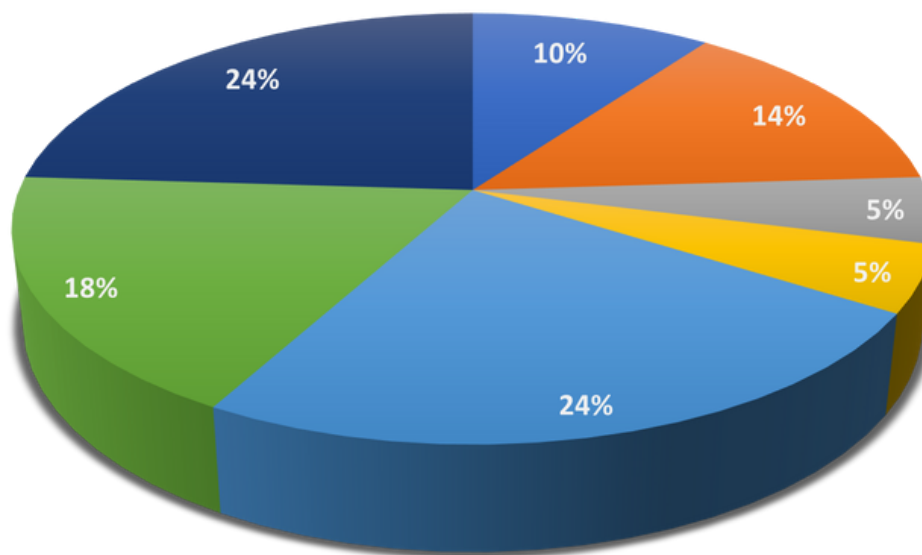
25,000+

CHILDREN TOOK PART IN
HANDS-ON AGRICULTURALLY
RELEVANT PROJECTS
FUNDED BY 71 AITC GRANTS

Connecting through Donors

Our donors make the work that we do at Agriculture in the Classroom possible. Because of all of you and your generosity, thousands of children and educators in this state are more knowledgeable about agriculture. Because of you, our Foundation experienced a year of tremendous growth, reaching a record high of connecting over 600,000 children to agriculture. Your past, present and future support enables the great work of our Foundation and ensures agricultural literacy thrives in our communities. Thank you!

Financials at a Glance



- Ag Organizations
- Corporations
- Private Foundations
- Individuals
- Special Events
- Farm Bureaus & Committees
- In-Kind

Direct Revenue: \$541,651

Contributions and Grants:	\$503,221
Gross Profit from Sales:	\$10,471
Investment Income:	\$27,959

Direct Expenses: \$498,440

Educator Programs & Resources:	\$381,949
Classroom Grants:	\$31,158
Direct Development:	\$85,333

In-Kind: \$185,287

Virginia Farm Bureau Federation:	\$162,432
Other In-Kind Gifts:	\$22,855

Virginia's AITC programs are supported 100% by donations, grants, events, and sponsorships through the Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom, a 501c3 non-profit charitable foundation. Donations and gifts are typically tax deductible.

This report recognizes gifts made to the Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. Gifts made after that time will be in acknowledged in the 2023-2024 Honor Roll of Donors. Every effort has been made to compile as accurate a report as possible. If however, you discover an error or an omission, please accept our apologies and bring it to our attention by calling 804-290-1030. Thank you!

Executive Director: Tammy Maxey

*Contributors & Writers:
Farm Bureau Federation Communications Department
Agriculture in the Classroom Staff*

*Photographers:
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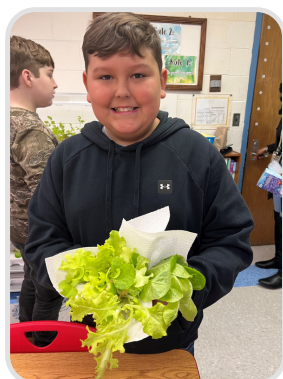


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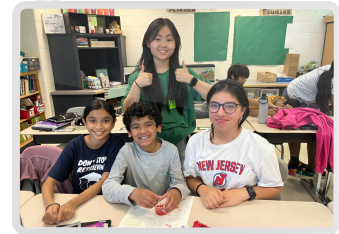
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