

# THE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL EXCELLENCE & CONSERVATION



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## Notes from the Field

Karen Zobel, Chair of the Science Department at West Nassau High School in Callahan, Florida, has been doing a terrific job of integrating aquaponics into her school's Bio-technology and Science curricula. The school has an outside building that holds their greenhouse center and aquaponics lab. Students are growing blue-gill bream to fertilize the 200 heads of lettuce they're producing. In addition, they've installed a living wall to grow herbs and a Dutch bucket system with Perlite. Presently, they have bumper crops of cilantro and oregano going.

The Bio-technology I students maintain the greenhouse and the fish. They also harvest the produce, which is given to faculty, staff, and students. For many students, it's their first time learning about agriculture and seeing the growth cycle from a seed packet to a salad. Students learn first-hand how the nitrogen cycle and photosynthesis work. One of the Environmental Science teachers may relocate to a classroom near the greenhouse so this project can be more easily incorporated into curriculum.

The experience of "learning by doing" has gotten students excited about possible careers in agriculture-related fields. While Nassau County is a rural area, not many WNHS students are involved in farming. Recently, one of the science classes was surprised to learn that when we eat broccoli, we're actually eating the plants' flowers! Even if the students never own a potted plant of their own, they have gained a new appreciation and understanding of where their food comes from.

In addition, college-bound students can earn community service hours for their work in taking care of the fish and the greenhouse, shown here. The Bright Futures scholarship program also gives students credit for their time spent working in the greenhouse. During the summer and holiday breaks, students keep the fish and plants growing, under the supervision of Ms. Zobel.



## The Center's 2018 Goals

We'll continue to work on our programs and projects to:

- Develop an institute for education and outreach so individuals can learn about sustainable agriculture practices and techniques and resource conservation.
- Development of sustainable agricultural systems using aquaponics that serve as a replicable model to be deployed throughout the Southeast.
- Design a sustainable primary ecosystem model for agronomy that has low or no impact on the community and environment.
- Support farmers in the deployment and ongoing operation of aquaponics and other farm-related systems.

**"FOOD IS ACCESSIBLE  
WHEN IT IS AFFORDABLE,  
AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
CAN READILY GROW OR  
RAISE IT; FIND IT; OBTAIN IT;  
TRANSPORT IT; PREPARE IT;  
AND EAT IT."**

### Check Out the News

Check out the Healthy Food Policy Project's website ([www.healthyfoodpolicyproject.org](http://www.healthyfoodpolicyproject.org)) to read about the food-related issues and legislation around the country. They are listed by state and by topic.

HFPP is a four-year collaboration of the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS), the Public Health Law Center (PHLC), and the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity. This project is funded by the National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.



### Greenhouse and Outdoor Hydroponics Short Course for Teachers

On March 29, 2018, the UF/IFAS Small Farms Academy is presenting a course for public and private school teachers in Live Oak, Florida. Registration includes class materials, lunch and refreshments. The session runs 8:30am to 4:30pm. Click [here](#) to read more about it and to register. Space is limited.

Some of the classroom and greenhouse activities include: Greenhouse and Shade Structures for Florida, Popular and Profitable Crops, Produc-

The Northeast Florida Veg Fest was held on March 3, 2018 at Riverside Park in Jacksonville. Families, vendors, shoppers, and neighbors enjoyed a beautiful spring day together.



We're already looking forward to next year's event!

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