

## Featured Teachers

### JCC FFA Kids Garden Club



#### Tell us about the JCC FFA Kids Garden Club.

The JCC Kids Garden club was started by our FFA Chapter for the summer of 2016. The garden was modeled after the Martin County West FFA Kids Garden Club. Through many grants we were able to start our garden that includes a fenced plot with 18 individual beds within the garden. We were able to connect to our softball complex's underground water system to implement the automatic water system for the garden.

The program ran for 10 weeks and elementary students – grades 2-4 - were able to sign up for a raised bed through our community education program. Each student paid \$45 for their bed with scholarships available to those in need. In each bed we planted lettuce, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, peppers, zucchini, cucumbers, radishes, onions, green beans, peas, and zinnias.

Two JCC FFA officers helped to plan the curriculum with the advisors and each week the officers taught the curriculum planned for the day.

#### How did agriculture and gardening impact the Kids Garden Club members? How did the FFA leaders benefit?

Our Kids garden club impacted the members by teaching them the importance of agriculture and how agriculture impacts their daily lives. Aside from the obvious of growing their own produce in the garden, one lesson example included teaching the students about the parts of the plants, giving them examples of various parts that we eat and then enjoying a salad comprised of all the parts.

The leaders benefitted by learning to interact with the younger students, designing fun and exciting plans each week, developing leadership skills and just enjoying the time spent with elementary students.



### **Describe the most successful elements of the Kids Garden Club.**

The most successful elements of the Kids Garden Club were the gardens themselves. When we planted the gardens with the kids we discussed how gardening isn't an exact science – we talked about differences in soil and how dependent on the weather a garden is. It was a new project and we were nervous about how it would go, but the gardens produced so well and the kids had a great time. The feedback we received for the parents was also very encouraging. The last week of garden club for the summer was bittersweet – the kids had a great time and didn't want it to end and neither did the officers.

### **What advice do you have for other teachers, FFA members or groups on implementing agriculture programs in their community?**



Our garden venture would not have been nearly as successful without the advice and help from the Martin County West instructors we received. They have had a program for a number of years and getting their input and thoughts on many areas of the garden was so helpful. Find another chapter near you that maybe has something similar and ask questions.

Filling out grant applications was also a great way to help fund the start-up costs. It can be overwhelming at first, but there are a number of organizations that want to help a program like a garden club.

### **Why do you believe it is important for our kids in your community to be [agriculturally literate](#)?**

The disconnect between the farm and the table continues to a challenge for people in general. Taking these 10 weeks to help students learn how to plant and care for their own produce was important to us and to them. It gave the students an appreciation and understanding of where their food comes from. We were able to take fresh produce from the garden and make salsa and zucchini noodles which the kids loved. We tried to send home recipes that families could make and enjoy together. We helped educate 18 students and their families and we hope to continue to do that each summer for many years.