

South Plantation Students Get Down & Dirty to Protect Mother Nature



BY BEVERLY PERKINS

For the past 15 years, the Environmental Science and Everglades Restoration Magnet program has been training students to become educated habitat stewards. Fortunately, many community partners have recognized the value of the teen-based workforce and collaborated with the school to put the knowledge into practice.

Personnel at the Youth Environmental Alliance (YEA!) work side-by-side with students in all grades to help the teens expand their knowledge base to become more accomplished stewards. Juniors in Experimental Science 3 take part in a three-part, hands-on program which takes place on campus and off-site.

“Working with students from South Plantation High is a unique opportunity to give the students the tools, knowledge and inspiration to be the change they seek in the world,” explains Kristen Hoss, Executive Director of YEA!

Students in this program can be seen spending a Saturday at the beach. However, they are not doing what most teens would be doing such as swimming, hanging out, tossing a ball, and getting some sunshine. These dedicated Paladins can be seen planting sea oats and picking up trash. And, around the school campus these students can be seen cleaning out weeds and invasive plants.

“It’s important to involve partners because teachers are teaching us the information, but partners are helping us apply it with hands-on experiences,” says junior Hallie Hodder of Fort Lauderdale.

All programs correlate directly with the curriculum and provide new and interactive ways to learn key content. Besides traveling to state parks to learn about flora, fauna, and ecosystems. Classroom activities include using Florida’s ecosystems as case studies to examine the challenges and opportunities that local species and organisms face. Another is testing water quality after pollution has occurred. These lessons facilitate awareness and empower the students to make conscious decisions about protecting the environment.

“This program trilogy takes the students from the theoretical to the practical and shows them in very tangible and personal ways what the issues are and how they can actually make a difference in solving them,” explained teacher Jody Berman.

“The hands-on aspect of this project was valuable to my everyday life because I have been able to take what I learned at school and use it in my garden at home,” added Jacob Ewert of Sunrise.