

Smyrna FFA Chapter Sells Ground Beef to Assist Wildfire Relief Efforts

Smyrna, DE - Students in the Animal Science Pathway at Smyrna High School have the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge and practical experience in the daily aspects of modern livestock production by caring for the livestock being raised on the school campus. As part of their instruction, they also learn about the production cycles and management decisions that go into raising livestock in today's agriculture industry. According to Mr. Keith Shane, animal science teacher and one of four FFA advisors at the school, one of the more challenging lessons for his students to learn is that the end product from these animals is food. "Since the overwhelming majority of my students are so removed from agricultural production and have very little to no background knowledge as to what goes into putting food on our table, it's tough for them to accept the fact that the animals we raise on the school campus will eventually be harvested and processed into meat for someone's freezer. They view these animals as pets because that's really how most of them have interacted with animals before taking my class."

Students also learn about issues facing livestock producers in the United States and follow current events involving livestock production. When wildfires struck the Great Plains in February, affecting over 2 million acres and countless livestock producers in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas, Mr. Shane felt it was time to bring these events closer to home. "We had a cow at the school that was a problem breeder, so we had made the management decision to cull her (remove her from the breeding herd) and have her processed into ground beef to sell out of the classroom. When I was sharing the events of the wildfire and showing the aftermath of the fires on those affected areas, I suggested to my students that a great use of this money would be to send it the wildfire relief efforts. When I told them that this money would be used to buy feed and hay for animals suffering from the effects of the fires, they were all for it."

The enthusiasm and response from the students' families and the staff at Smyrna High School was tremendous. In less than 2 weeks, the chapter had sold all 439 pounds of ground beef and raised \$1873 from the sale. Additional monies will be taken from the FFA Livestock Account to

bring the total donation to \$2000, which will be sent to an FFA chapter in Kansas whose members were affected by the fires. “Ideally, we would have been able to generate a larger donation if we had a steer that was ready for market at the time, but being able to donate this amount has been a very rewarding experience for my students,” according to Mr. Shane. “I think this activity also helped to create a little more awareness as to what our farmers and ranchers have to face on a daily basis in order to produce the food that we eat, and I would like to thank all who supported it.”



The Smyrna FFA Chapter was chartered in 1976 and currently has over 450 members that are enrolled in 5 separate pathways: Animal Science, Plant Science, Agricultural Structures, Agricultural Mechanics, and Environmental Science. FFA advisors at the chapter include Mr. Keith Shane, Mrs. Kellie Michaud, Mr. Jay Davis, and Mrs. Sarah Bell.

The FFA Mission

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.