

Below is only a suggestion on how to begin an Ag-Venture program. This program has been in existence for more than 20 years. Ag-Ventures is a non-profit organization. There are many ways to conduct an ag-venture program. You could start an ag-ventures program by taking it on the road to one school a year. Please watch for updates on this section.

GETTING STARTED

Our county had a Farm City and Farm Safety Day sponsored by our Farm Bureau in our Agri-Civic Center. They were great projects but not really organized. There were typically around 300 students and 12 presenters in this one room all trying to talk over one another. The children were standing at every station, which was not ideal for keeping their attention. There was nothing hands-on at the stations. We knew there was something better.

We heard about Hillsborough County's Ag-Venture at the AITC Volunteer Conference in Ocala. It sounded like the type of program we were looking for. We called and made arrangements to visit their program. About six of us loaded up and went to Tampa to see how they did theirs. We all came home so excited. There was never a lull in conversation on the way home. Everyone was throwing out ideas and suggestions. We brought home pictures and a video and lots of enthusiasm.

Next, we contacted some key people in our county. We wanted to familiarize them with the program we wanted to do. We invited:

- Director of Elem. Programs for the School Board
- Several Elem. School principals and their AITC liaisons
- Farm Bureau field coordinator
- 4-H representatives
- Someone from Cattlewomen
- A fairgrounds representative
- County school bus coordinator
- A representative from Jaycees
- Young Farmer and Ranchers Rep.
- Newspaper reporters
- Citrus Growers Representative
- And anyone else we thought would be interested!

This meeting was held over lunch hour at our house. We fed everyone a light lunch and had our meeting. We showed the video while we were eating from Hillsborough County so that they could see why we were excited.

These are some of the questions we tackled:

- What time of year would be best to have the program?
- What days of the week would the schools prefer? Middle of the week
- Could we use the fairgrounds and when would it be available?
- Is 3rd grade a good age?
- Do we include all of our counties 3rd grade students-home, private and public?
- What commodity groups?
- How will we pay for it? Donations

Everyone thought it was a great idea and their response was "We think you should do it". We decided on three co-chairmen. Our next step was for the three of us to get together and have a major brainstorming session. Picture this: 3 of us in sweats, socks, pizza on the counter and no children or husbands for 6 hours straight.

During that meeting we decided who we wanted to ask to be on our board of directors. We made sure to include people from all areas of the county and very different walks of life.

We did a rough draft of our daily schedule, determined our stations, what each would involve, materials needed for them, number of tables, types of seating, and which tract each would be in.

- Set up a budget, what types of expenses we expected (now I can say we had no idea what we were doing)
- Monthly- now we only meet 2-3 times a year)
- talked about ways to publicize the event
- ways of gaining sponsorships

We designed our own brochure that we wanted to have printed in color. Until we found out it would cost \$2.50 each. So-we printed them ourselves on our home computers at about .40 each.

We felt letterhead was a must and that it should be professional. We wanted to be taken seriously but we also did not have \$600+ to set up and print it. One of our local printers was delivering to our business when we were discussing this and he offered to do it all for free. We have found that most people want to help if you ask them.

Next, we met with the School Board Superintendent to OK the dates and get his blessing. He scheduled a time for us to meet all of the elementary school principals in the county and a time for us to meet with all of the 3rd grade teachers during pre-planning this summer.

We started publicizing our program by scheduling speaking engagements throughout the county. We sent a letter to all of the service organizations asking them if we could come speak about Ag-Venture. (They are always looking for a speaker for their meetings.) We spoke with

boards of different commodity groups. Each time we spoke we handed out our brochures and began with the [APPLE demonstration](#) or play [BEEF-O-BINGO](#). We would describe the program and then ask for volunteers and financial support.

Some of the organizations we included are:

- County Farm Bureau Board
- Florida Nurserymen and Landscapers Assoc.-station and money
- Cattlewomen and Cattlemen- station and money
- Citrus Growers Assoc.-station and money
- Kiwanis
- Rotary
- Lions Clubs
- FFA Alumni Associations
- Jaycees
- Farm Credit
- Garden Clubs
- Business Sororities
- Extension Office
- Tractor companies- money and tractors
- And any other organization that would have us!

Next, we sent out a letter, brochure and volunteer/donation for to approximately 500 businesses and individuals throughout the county. We made up our list from the Chamber of Commerce directories, FNGLA directory, Citrus Growers, Cattlemen, etc. and any other names suggested by friends.

We also went thru the phone book and selected any business we thought benefited from the Ag commodities produced in our area. The newspapers were great about writing articles and asking for volunteers and donations.

SUGGESTIONS:

- MAKE SURE THE COMMUNITY IS AWARE AND INVOLVED
- GIVE EVERYONE A CHANCE TO DONATE AND VOLUNTEER
- MAKE SURE EVERYONE KNOWS HOW MUCH THEY ARE APPRECIATED!