*****NEWS RELEASE*****

April 27, 2026

QUEEN ANNE'S COUNTY 7TH GRADERS EXPLORE AGRICULTURE THROUGH HANDS-ON LEARNING EXPERIENCE

FFA members, students from SMS, Dr. Matthew Kibler, Dr. Billie Brice, and QACPS Board Members Mrs. Alexis Capes & Mrs. Carrie Sutherland

Centreville, MD - Seventh-grade students from Queen Anne's County Public Schools (QACPS) recently participated in unique, hands-on educational experiences designed to highlight the importance of Maryland's leading industry, agriculture.

As global populations continue to grow, understanding agriculture and its role in sustaining communities are more important than ever. To help students make these connections, a coalition of agricultural educators, industry professionals, and youth leaders from 4-H, FFA, and the Teachers' Academy of Maryland (TAM) collaborated to host this countywide event.

The 9th Annual "Agriculture Awareness Day" took place over two days, welcoming students from Stevensville and Matapeake Middle Schools on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 followed by Centreville and Sudlersville Middle Schools on Wednesday, April 22, 2026.

The program is aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards and Maryland Environmental Literacy Standards, ensuring that students gain meaningful, curriculum-based insights into agriculture. Throughout the day, students rotated through a series of interactive educational stations, engaging in hands-on activities that showcased the diversity of agricultural industries. Topics ranged from crop and livestock production to environmental stewardship and emerging agricultural technologies.

In addition to learning about where their food comes from, students were introduced to the wide range of career opportunities available within the agricultural sector, helping to inspire the next

generation of agricultural professionals.

Special thanks to Jenny Rhodes from the University of Maryland Extension, QACPS employees, and community organizations and volunteers who came together to make this event possible.

Jenny Rhodes, Principal Agent of Agriculture & Food Systems with the Queen Anne's County University of Maryland Extension, said "The long-term success of the agriculture industry depends on engaging and educating the next generation. Agriculture Awareness Day in Queen Anne's County directly addresses this by introducing 7th graders to the wide world of agriculture and its career possibilities. We are dedicated to providing an increasingly interactive and hands-on educational experience each year. The support of University of Maryland Extension educators statewide highlights the collective commitment to this program, and it's inspiring to see our community unite for this vital goal."

Dr. Matthew Kibler, QAC Public Schools Superintendent of Schools says "This is one of my favorite events of the year because it truly brings learning to life for our students. Agriculture Awareness Day highlights the vital role agriculture plays in Queen Anne's County while opening students' eyes to the wide range of career opportunities within this essential industry. Experiences like this help students make meaningful connections between what they learn in the classroom and the possibilities for their future."

Connie Dean, Workforce Development Administrator at QAC Economic & Tourism Development, recounted "As the career station coordinator, I had the pleasure of hearing numerous students say they never knew about many of these careers represented, or how to know what job skills they are good at – or not. It is hands-on experiences like these, as well as this direct connection between students and our workforce/businesses that make such an impact on career awareness of our youth. and their career decision making journey."

Jessica Clarke, Crop Insurance Agent with Horizon Farm Credit, commented "The Agriculture Awareness Day is an event that really connects our kids in the county with our strong agriculture community. They see so much agriculture around them every day and it is exciting to be able to have this event to connect them to that diverse agriculture right in their backyards. The agriculture industry has shaped me into the person I am today, which is why I enjoy being able to give back and advocate for the industry. With hopes to spark students' interest in future college or career pathways in agriculture. It amazes me at the 100 plus volunteers we get each day from throughout the community that are willing to do the same. This event wouldn't be possible without all of them!"

This collaborative effort continues to strengthen connections between education and industry while fostering a deeper appreciation for agriculture's vital role in everyday life.

For more information about Agriculture Awareness Day or future educational programs, please contact the University of Maryland Extension - Queen Anne's County Office.

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