



# Farm Bureau Highlight

## Dr. Jim Dyer

By G. Shane Morris



In the past, we've run many articles about Florida Farm Bureau members dedicated to preserving and passing on the agricultural trade to future generations. Most of these have centered on the traditions of families, passing down farming and ranching from father to son and from mother to daughter. This time however, the skills are being passed not through family, but through education.

Jim Dyer, a native of rural East Tennessee, moved down to Florida in 2001 together with his

wife, Barbara, to pursue a career as an agricultural instructor at the University of Florida.

"My family and I moved to Florida after more than nineteen years of teaching high school agriculture in Tennessee," explained Jim. Soon after moving, he got plugged in to Hillsborough County Farm Bureau as a way to pursue a lifelong passion in his new home.

But Jim is no stranger to state Farm Bureaus and the work they do. "I first became involved in the Tennessee Farm Bureau at age sixteen," he told me. "I've always been a loyalist to [the organization]. But of course, back then I saw Farm Bureau from an insurance standpoint. When I became a teacher though, I really got to know it by the role it plays in preserving and promoting agriculture in government."

Almost everything Jim did back then seemed to center around or stem from agriculture and the Tennessee Farm Bureau. "I was a member of the Ag-Ed program there," he said, "Plus many other things they sponsored like public speaking and parliamentary procedure in high school."

Fast-forward to today, and you can easily see how these skills have served Jim well. He now works as a teacher-educator for the University of Florida, instructing those who will later impart that knowledge to aspiring students of agriculture. "I teach teachers about teaching," joked Jim.

Of course, all of this came in the midst of his heartfelt involvement with Hillsborough County Farm Bureau. Jim related to me his excitement at being voted onto the Board of Directors at the Bureau. "I was really honored when I was nominated for the position," he told me. "They do so much for agriculture. They're such high-quality individuals and their support for farmers in the county and across the state is just phenomenal."

Jim also expressed his own vision for the Bureau and its ongoing work in Florida. "Whether it's written or not, one of the Farm Bureau's main missions is to make sure that agriculture has a place in the future of Florida. I've just been amazed at all the interest and knowledge I have seen among the individuals. They know which Senate or House

bill is coming up and what particular piece of legislation impacts farmers. It's like having someone that watches over your business for you. Since coming to Florida and seeing the members of Farm Bureau at work, I've just been amazed at how involved they are in all facets of agriculture."

These days, Jim has a lot more time to devote to Farm Bureau, especially now that his kids are grown and gone. "My son is career military and my daughter is a nurse anesthetist," he said. When I asked him if either of his children planned to get involved with agriculture, his answer surprised me. "Well actually, my son's career was a result of agriculture. He was a member of Future Farmers of America all throughout his high school education. Because of his interest in computers and taking some of his agriculture courses online, he became interested in the military." Jim's son chose to serve as an information technician, providing valuable training to American troops before they ship off to other parts of the world.

"You must be very proud of him." I said.

"I certainly am," replied Jim. "He's a fine young man."

As our interview came to a close, it was pretty evident that Jim Dyer is an avid supporter of Farm Bureau and its work. "If anyone is involved in agriculture in any way," he told me, "I would encourage them to become a member of Farm Bureau. It is the advocacy group for agriculture. These days you have to have someone who advocates for you, and Farm Bureau certainly does that. I believe in that organization. I've seen it at work from several different angles, and it's a worthy group to be a part of."

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