



Counselor/ Farmer Alvin Butler (centered) surrounded by LIFT Health Youth

FARM ESSENTIALS WITH MR. BUTLER

LIFT Youth to Butler Family Farm Micanopy, FL

Alvin Butler serves as an athletic counselor for the University of Florida football team. He attributes some of the team's' success to an overall healing element involved in the process of counseling the players. While he spends a lot of his time managing a professional counseling business, Butler also owns and operates a cattle farm that has been in the family for 95 years.



In July 2016, he extended an open invitation for LIFT Health youth to

experience a day in the life of a cattle farmer. Alvin shared the story of how his great, great grandfather was freed from slavery in 1863 shortly before the end of the Civil War. The great grandfather remained in the local area and purchased land (owned for 4 generations) adjacent to the property later purchased by his grandfather. His grandfather in 1919 purchased 5 acres of land located now situated between two large conservation areas, which included the still standing family home. This farmland has been owned by 3 generations of the Butler family.



Lessons In Life

Butler's first word of advice to the LIFT Health youth group was about the importance of preparation. Living and working on a farm has many valuable lessons that can be applied to everyday life. ***"On a farm, you don't put things off. If something goes wrong, you must fix it right away!"***, Butler stated. Taking immediate action is an essential part of keeping the farm running properly and also keeping the animals safe.

Farm Essentials

Before taking the tour LIFT Health Youth learned about different types of cattle found on the farm. From Brangus to Hereford and even Piedmontese which the children likened to a "big bear", each one had the opportunity to feed and interact with a variety of cattle. After visiting the pole barn to collect feed, some of the youth were



able to feed the cattle while others sprayed for flies. Butler noted that feeding the cows often and raising them humanely keeps them gentle. The cattle are not injected with hormones, steroids or antibiotics, which makes the Butler meat of considerable value to a concerned clientele. The joy of childish laughter filled the air as LIFT Health youth played atop some of the 100 rolls of hay before hopping in the back of the truck to head off to some of the nearby family owned property.

One piece of the property is used to house bee colonies owned by Dan Burch. Since the young age of 8 years old, Burch has been an avid bee farmer. Now 64 years old, Birch spends his time teaching people about the importance of bees and their impact on our environment.

"Bees help pollinate other crops and vegetation. We currently have a shortage of bees and that's why it's important that we take extra care in what chemicals we use on the land."

A short distance from the bee farm was Levy Prairie which is presently an aquifer conservation area. "This is Old Florida. You can still find arrowheads from Indians who lived in this area. They would make huts from these same palm trees and fought off settlers in this area" said Butler. LIFT Health youth traversed the land as Butler pointed out numerous native animals in the area from wild hogs and bears to coyotes and snakes.

The most important lesson learned during the visit was the connection our youth have to the land and its resources. While city life is the norm for most, there is a balance in being one with nature as well.



Harlem B. Young
LIFT Health Executive Director

