

Career Academy students learn about littoral zones.

One of the main goals of the Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District (HSWCD) is education. The Career Academy program, specifically the Environmental Science classes, has given HSWCD staff the opportunity to teach students the importance of the environment and give them hands-on training in the real world. Last year, Erin McCarta, Lakes Management Assistant and Corine Burgess, Natural Resources Specialist shared their knowledge of the environment with the Career Academy Students.

Carrying on the tradition, this year's Environmental Science instructor Cheryl Moffat asked the pair to come out and teach her students as well. On November 10<sup>th</sup>, about 60 students got educated on the littoral zone at Lake Glenada. Equipped with seine nets, dip nets, trash bags and hip waders, Erin and Corine visited the 3 classes and taught them what lives in the littoral zones of our lakes. The students got in the water and netted many different types of critters including small fish such as bream, chubs, and minnows as well as shrimp, snails, dragonfly larvae and different types of plants.

The students seemed to have a good time and hopefully learned a lot from the experience. Some of the students were also involved in last year's adventures and already knew the drill. They helped the other kids with the nets. It was a great opportunity for staff to teach the students. We believe that by hands on training such as this, students retain what they learn and remember the experience as a positive one.

Career Academy is a program involving high school students in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades. While training for a technical career these students are able to complete their required high school courses in one location, which is the South Florida Community College campus. This new venture of the Highlands County School Board and the college's Division of Applied Sciences and Technologies, allows students to spend half a day in standard academic classes and the other half in college-level technical courses.

The benefits of this program are many; the student only has to travel to one location, which eliminates travel time, allowing them to spend more time in classes. Costs for tuition and books are deferred and by obtaining technical training while in high school, students can earn a diploma while completing the requirements for a certificate or associate's degree in applied sciences. The goal is that upon graduation, they will be qualified to hold a well-paying job in the technical field of their choice.

The next session with the students will be an exotic removal day. It is important to teach our future generations about how much damage invasive, exotic species are causing our environment as well as other environmental issues that we face in today's world. These young adults are the future and it is important that they understand their environment, are good stewards of the land and that they teach others to take care of our precious resources.