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4-H University utilizes Levy County shooting ranges; *Cedar Key is a destination too*



Volusia County 4-H Extension Agent Laura Cash (foreground) helps 4-H University student Hannah Granholm of Collier County learn a finer point about a particular .22 caliber rifle in Bronson. Granholm said she enjoyed the workshops at 4-H University and she enjoyed the community of 4-H University students with whom she interacted while in Gainesville.

Story, Photos and Video By Jeff M. Hardison © July 28, 2016 @ 10:27 p.m.

LEVY COUNTY – Culminating the 4-H Year, is a five-day experience (July 25-29) at the University of Florida and it is known as 4-H University.

This weeklong event was previously named 4-H Congress.

On Thursday (July 28), one part of that amazing experience included a field trip from Gainesville to Bronson, and a trip to Cedar Key for some participants. There are 250 students in 4-H University this year.

The whole 4-H University experience is an event that includes overnights for senior 4-H youth (ages 14 to 18 years old) as they stay on the University of Florida campus in Gainesville.

Participants come from the 4-H programs available in most of the total 67 Florida counties where 4-H exists. Monroe County may be the only county without an active 4-H program this year.

Attendees enjoyed the opportunity to participate in educational workshops lead by University of Florida faculty in Gainesville on the U.F. campus. Those workshops included lessons about nature, effective communication, leadership and more.

Participants explored career opportunities, lead community service activities, interacted with other youth from all over the state, and had fun while developing critical life skills that will help them become productive and engaged citizens of their communities, their country and their world.

This year, rather than a fashion show, there was a talent show.

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Students shoot arrows from bows at targets.



In this photo (above), one set of archery shooters retires as the next group prepares to practice their shooting skills.

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Shotgun shooters aim at flying clay disks, which have been thrown into the air mechanically. The orange clay disks waiting to be launched sit in the machine in the left of this picture.



Some of the many 4-H University participants in Bronson enjoy lunch on Thursday.

By participating in competition for poultry barbecue, public speaking, and horticulture identification, 4-H members develop skills even beyond those on the surficial layer from that participation.

These 250 Florida 4-H members, who are said to be “the cream of the crop” from every part

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of the state (except perhaps the Florida Keys) enjoyed workshops such as the “Introduction to Shooting Sports” program in Bronson.

Dr. Jerry Culen, the University of Florida state specialist in shooting sports as well as the 4-H shooting sports coordinator, was among the adults helping the students in Bronson.

Charlie Poliseno, a 4-H agent from Hillsborough County, was another adult there to assist in this field trip part of the 4-H University.

All of the students at the shooting range in Bronson had chances to demonstrate they had learned about safety and marksmanship in archery, shotgun shooting and .22 caliber rifle shooting.

The first lessons they learned were safety lessons, and all of the firearms shooters had eye protection and ear protection before they took their first shot.

Volusia County 4-H Extension Agent Laura Cash organized the shooting sports track of lessons for 4-H University students this year. Cash is known in state 4-H circles as being a very accomplished leader in shooting sports activities.

In addition to Boston in archery and Cash in riflery, there were other adults, including shotgun instructor Don Loftus, Range Safety Officer Tim Parker and Alachua County 4-H volunteer Rich Mathis.

Loftus is not the only certified range safety officer on the scene that day, but he was wearing the bright green vest with “RSO” on it. The set of adults sent on this field trip are all extensively vetted in shooting sports.

Leon County 4-H Agent Marcus Boston introduced the students to archery safety and shooting. The students drew battleships, which they placed on the targets. They shot arrows to sink the battleships.

Also in Levy County that day, some members of 4-H University went to Cedar Key, where they learned about marine and aquatic sciences. There is aquaculture on Cedar Key, where clams are grown and harvested.

Clams are a multi-million dollar annual crop in Cedar Key.

The students that went to the western edge of the Levy County rode on a boat in the Gulf of Mexico.

And that’s not all that set of 4-H University members did on this field trip.

They enjoyed learning about marine life as they were led by State 4-H Science Coordinator Karen Blyler, another faculty member at the University of Florida.

This set of 4-H University students boarded University of Florida’s vessel named Discovery, as they took a short cruise to the University of Florida’s Seahorse Key Marine Lab.

During the boat trip, they had opportunities to pull nets to collect marine life and use scientific tools to measure the water’s quality.

Afterwards, the boat docked at the Seahorse Key Marine Lab, where they looked at and learned about a variety of marine animals.

After lunch, the group engaged in a hands-on marine science activity followed by a tour of the historical lighthouse on the island.

There were other workshops during the week of 4-H University, which were about meats, horses, fashion, careers and everything else that is connected with 4-H, including leadership.

The State 4-H Council officers are elected during this week of activity at 4-H University on the U.F. campus.

The 4-H University attendees enjoyed a tour of the U.F. campus as well.

A dance, a banquet, scholarships and awards are all part of the package for participants in 4-H University. It was a phenomenal week with many unique experiences for the 4-H members who came from all over Florida.

This year, there was even the inaugural Gator Pit -- which is similar to Shark Tank (on TV). Five participants put forth their ideas for new enterprises. The winner of that competition went home with a \$1,000 scholarship to put toward their enterprise.