

# Getting to the hearts of the children

## *Palm Beach GCSA and Jupiter Farms Community Elementary School: Audubon Expansion*

BY JOSEPH HUBBARD, CGCS

*Jonathan's Landing Old Trail  
Dickinson Management, Inc.*

**M**ost people do not understand many things in life and no one person has all the answers all of the time. These are givens to our limitations and our domain, and accepted by most.

Yet, when these same people are shown the beauty of natural creations such as trees, streams, insects, flowers, mountains, wildlife, etc. the unification of their resolve to strip away those constraints becomes limitless. Their energy is renewed and their thirst for the knowledge of everything about that environment to be explored is all consuming.

Passion is sorely lacking today for almost any cause, but watch the eyes of children as they wonder in awe when they see an animal from the wilds brought to a school, or as they watch National Geographic specials on TV. They are totally mesmerized by the creatures before them which in turn brings an avalanche of questions.

It is learning in its purest form and can develop that passion at a young age. As I studied the pamphlet, Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Schools, that Audubon International had sent out, the children's eyes and eagerness to be involved came to my mind.

When you are a superintendent in the golf industry it is very easy to "live" your job and to not be absorbed in the lives of your children day in and day out. The long hours and the heavy demands can weigh you down (Although, you would be hard pressed to find one superintendent who would give it all up).

However, when something of this nature mirrors so close with what you are trying to achieve at your golf course,

## Project Naturescope: Children Exploring Their Environment

Five years ago an on-going environmental effort was launched at Jupiter Farms Community Elementary School, which eventually was named *Project Naturescope*. Its initial intent was to utilize the pine flatlands of our campus to carve out a nature trail.

That first year far surpassed that goal when we succeeded in establishing two nature trails and a butterfly garden on our campus without cost to our school.

That first year 60 science students shared their efforts, along with the efforts of their parents, local scout troops, local nurseries and teachers, as they invited the entire school to attend the first of what have become annual Earth Week Tours of our natural areas and butterfly garden.

Project Naturescope has grown into a cooperative effort that continues to utilize student and community talents, as well as occasional assistance from students from the agriculture department of Jupiter High School.

It has operated solely on donated plants and materials since its inception, yet has succeeded in bringing to our school a \$1000 grant from the Community Foundation and \$250 grant of native trees from the Florida Nurserymen's Association.

Last year, recognizing the need to expand our efforts to include several areas on campus that had been sorely neglected by county landscape crews, Project Naturescope students removed approximately 20 badly diseased trees and shrubs and heavily pruned overgrown areas on campus.

These efforts were quickly recognized by Ray Bridges, School Board landscape and grounds supervisor, who offered us unlimited use of the county nursery in Delray Beach. JFES was given approximately \$750 worth of landscape plants, used to replant several areas on campus.

At this time we have been approved for adoption by the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Palm Beach County through the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System. We are one of two schools in Palm Beach County chosen for work we have already done in the area of environment science as well as school site.

We hope to receive help soon for acquiring gardening tools and much needed materials. As Project Naturescope continues to grow, more grant opportunities will be available to our school through the Audubon Society of New York State, perhaps to assist in the construction of the environmental center.

As 15 parents, 60 students, and two teachers converged last spring to celebrate Earth Day with a massive schoolwide Earth Day Clean-up, the success of Project Naturescope couldn't have been more evident.

Student "managers," trained all year to appreciate their environment, moved from area to area on campus, removing litter, weeding, pruning, and planting. That same day our application for the President's Environmental Award from the EPA arrived.

*-Dianne Hermanski,  
Project Naturescope Coordinator and  
Third grade teacher  
Jupiter Farms Elementary*



*Naturescope coordinator Diane Hermanski and Buzz Jaskela of Florida Landscape Design discuss the master plan for Project Naturescope. Photo by Joe Hubbard.*





One of two nature trails established during the first year of Project Naturescope. Photo by Joe Hubbard.

there can be no other recourse than to get involved with your child's school or any school close by that is making an effort to better the world around them.

One such school is Jupiter Farms Community Elementary School located in the northern part of Palm Beach County, west of Jupiter. It is noted for its rural area, with many horse owners, trainers, dirt roads, wildlife, natural uplands and wetlands.

The school is located in the heart of Jupiter Farms or "The Farms" as it is respectfully called. With an average of 870 students in attendance, grades kindergarten through fifth, 41 teachers try to expand the potential of each child to be an example of community effort for everyone's benefit.

The Palm Beach Chapter of Florida Golf Course Superintendents, proudly adopted the school into the ACSP for Schools program in 1997. We wanted to help make a difference in the kids percep-

tion of the environment by broadening their window of knowledge further than the classroom. Many people do not realize what scope of stewardship superintendents must elevate to in understanding the natural environment of our properties and what it takes to *protect* it at all costs. With the help of volunteers, teachers, various clubs and nurseries, this type of responsibility and love for the environment is what we hope to instill in our children.

With the support of Diane Hermanski, third grade instructor and Naturescope Coordinator (*see sidebar*), principal Marilyn Weisgerber and assistant principal Lela Tolbert, our plans for this school are to start upgrading some of the sorely neglected areas on campus.

Buzz Jaskela, of Florida Landscape Design, and I had an opportunity to identify these areas on our recent visit with Hermanski. A master plan for phase development that Jaskela will help design,



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will enable the school to become an important environmental base for the Jupiter area, while eventually achieving certification with the ACSP for Schools.

There are plans already in the works for several of the 59 acres that encompass the school property. Building a state-of-the-art environmental center in the southern section of land by the wetlands will enhance the ACSP program to another level.

Jupiter Farms' close proximity to superintendent Mike Ballard's course, Cypress Links Golf Club and to my course, Jonathan's Landing Old Trail Country Club will enable us to have a "hands on" relationship with the school. Several other superintendents, including Chip Fowkes at Frenchman's Creek, have expressed a desire to be involved in the development of this program and can help in making presentations to the community on our progress.

According to Audubon International,

the concept of the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System was to create an international program designed to help landowners preserve and enhance the environmental quality of their property.

Schools in the program protect and learn about our natural heritage through stewardship projects that enhance wildlife habitat and conserve natural resources on school grounds.

Rather than focusing on field trips or environmental studies of exotic places and wildlife species, the program provides information and guidance to help schools turn part of their grounds into natural areas that attract wildlife.

This program encourages the school to develop an outdoor classroom and adopt indoor conservation projects such as water and energy reduction, recycling and composting.

"By creating a sanctuary at the school, students build a lasting relationship with their environment and are empowered

with the knowledge that their actions do make a difference," explained Joellen Zeh, staff ecologist for the Audubon International. "We welcome Jupiter Farms School's commitment to environmentally responsible property management and environmental education.

By joining and participating in the ACSP, the school will be involved in projects that enhance wildlife habitat and conserve natural resources for the benefit of the community, while offering students engaging environmental education projects.

These projects may include: placing nesting boxes for cavity-nesting birds such as bluebirds and purple martins; using native plants in gardens to attract butterflies, hummingbirds and songbirds; conserving water and energy; composting; and recycling.

"The Cooperative Sanctuary System benefits both people and the environment," said Zeh.

**ACSP FOR SCHOOLS**

***Palm Beach GCSA makes natural link with Kidstown***

BY JEFF KLONTZ

*Country Club of Florida*

The Palm Beach Golf Course Superintendents Association wants to make a difference in environmental education. With funds from our annual Futures of Golf Tournament, we adopted Kidstown Learning Center into the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program (ACSP) for Schools.

Kidstown Learning Center in Boynton Beach has children from infants to 12 years old. The teachers plan to educate students about the environment they live and play in. The Audubon program will enhance children's value to belong with nature and will teach them to respect the earth's natural resources.

Paula Poupore, owner of Kidstown Learning Center, was very interested in working jointly with the PBGCSA to



*Using funds from their annual Futures of Golf Tournament, the Palm Beach GCSA helped Kidstown Learning Center build a butterfly garden, aviary, caterpillar garden and a vegetable garden.*

incorporate the Audubon program into the curriculum at the school.

The first step was creating a plan.

Since the property was under construction, we enlisted Buzz Jaskela, a landscape architect, to help create a plan of action that would incorporate all aspects of the school program developed by

Audubon International. Before drawing up this plan, we met with teachers to get their input into projects they would like to see developed for the children.

Within 30 days, we had a plan of action that included a butterfly garden, aviary, caterpillar garden, and a project the teachers expressed the most