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News Release

St. Clair County Celebrates National Farm-City Week

This year, St. Clair County is joining other communities across the nation in celebrating the annual observance of Farm-City Week. For the past 54 years National Farm-City Week has provided a link between our nation's rural and urban people.

Founded by Kiwanis International, the week was established to help achieve unity among all American workers—on and off the farm. This year's theme, "Farmers Care—For Animals and You," focuses on the steps farmers take to make sure they raise healthy animals and produce safe food for our families.

The highlight of this year's celebration was our annual Farm-City Banquet held Monday, November 9th. The event featured Mr. John Willoughby, Marketing Specialist with the Alabama Farmers Market Authority, as the guest speaker. He spoke of the role of the Farmers Market Authority (FMA), a state agency, and how it was established to assist in the marketing of agricultural products by providing information, leadership, and modern facilities necessary to move agricultural products from the farm to the consumer. He also mentioned the success of the St. Clair County Farmers Market, which debuted in Pell City this past summer.

Two St. Clair County farms, the Vaughan Family Farm and the Lowery Farm, were both recognized as Alabama Century and Heritage Farms. These farms have been owned and operated by the same family for over 100 years. Also, county winners of the Farm-City Week Scarecrow, as well as poster and essay contests were announced. Victoria Booker, a 4-H'er from Springville, won first place in the essay contest which will go on to state competition. Her winning essay appears below:

Farmers Care – For Animals and You

Have you ever wondered how that big juicy steak ended up on your plate? Or, how about the honey you ate on a homemade biscuit? Both of these things, and many others, come from animals. Most people don't realize it, but, farm animals have a big impact on our lives. We have many things to thank them for. Just think, without the many products animals provide us with we wouldn't have fried chicken or simple things like chewing gum.

Cattle provide many different meat, dairy, and by-products as well. Today, you had or used one of them.

Remember, when you woke up and had a bowl of cereal and some milk? Milk is high in calcium which promotes healthy teeth and bones.

For instance, at lunchtime, you ate a big hamburger and some fries. Then, you sit down to watch a relaxing movie and eat your favorite snack, French vanilla ice cream. Technically, ice cream isn't the healthiest thing, but you have certain daily recommended amounts of each food group. Ice cream would fall under the dairy group.

You just remembered! You need to glue some ribbon on your report. You whip out your handy glue stick. What does this have to do with cows? Glue is made from cattle by-products, or the leftovers. Sometimes, you use cattle products without realizing it.

With that being said, if we did not have grasses or grains to feed the cows, we couldn't have many of those products. All thanks to one amazing insect, we don't have to worry much about it. The bee is one magnificent creature. They create a sweet substance known to us as honey. Bees not only manufacture this sweet treat, but also provide an invaluable service called pollination. Without this, many plants would begin to die off. No, bees aren't the only pollinator, but they are one of the main ones that pollinate. Bees come to our rescue when it comes to plants. Now it's our turn to rescue the bees. Many wild honeybees are dying and scientists don't know why. It's our job to find out why they are dying and to protect the low population of farm raised bees we have left.

We all (yes all) love chicken. It doesn't matter how you eat it. Poultry is a healthy meat (when cooked right) and it is also delicious. But, chickens not only furnish us with meat, they also supply us with eggs. Alabama is ranked 13th nationally for producing so many eggs. That is a lot of eggs! If we didn't have farmers taking care of their chickens we wouldn't have poultry as a staple.

There is nothing more organic than chicken fertilizer. Many farmers use this natural by-product because it is very effective and it won't harm the environment. Although, it doesn't have the most pleasant aroma, it does fertilize the soil in a more natural way.

What does all this mean? Without the importance of animals, we wouldn't survive, nor would we thrive. The occupation of farming encompasses millions of people across this great nation. That's a lot of jobs! We, as city folk, as well as farmers, need to make sure that farm animals live in clean healthy environments. When farmers make sure the animals are healthy, they are making sure we're healthy. Farmers directly affect us in some way or another on a daily basis. That is why when farmers care for animals, from cows to bees, they're caring for you and me.