

Farm Credit Mid America, Kentucky State University Celebrate Opening of Tates Creek Middle School Greenhouse & Land Lab

New greenhouse and outdoor classroom enhance agriculture education, connecting students to real-world careers and college-level research

LEXINGTON, KY, UNITED STATES, April 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Farm Credit Mid America](#), [Kentucky State University](#) (KSU) and representatives from Fayette County Public Schools joined Tates Creek elementary and middle school students, agriculture student ambassadors, faculty and staff on Thursday, April 2 to celebrate the grand opening of a new professional grade greenhouse and land lab at [Tates Creek Middle School](#).



Students from Tates Creek Middle School at the ribbon cutting for new greenhouse. & land lab

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The greenhouse is the latest addition to an agriculture education program led by Eli Parham, agriculture teacher at Tates Creek Middle School, that connects middle school instruction with college level research and real world agricultural careers. The program introduces urban students to the wide range of opportunities available in agriculture while instilling leadership and research skills they will carry with them through any career.

Farm Credit Mid America supported the greenhouse and surrounding land lab with a \$150,000 grant to Kentucky State University. The grant, made possible through the

lender’s community investment program, underscores its commitment to investing in rural communities and agriculture beyond providing credit.

“Our customer owned cooperative has supported rural communities and agriculture for more

than 100 years,” said Mark Barker, senior vice president of ag lending at Farm Credit Mid America. “Investments like this greenhouse help students see a future for themselves in agriculture and ensure our communities remain strong for generations to come.”

The greenhouse and outdoor space serve as an extension of the school’s farm to fork program and function as an outdoor classroom for gardening, floral production and agriscience research. Students gain hands on experience in plant science, agronomy, soil science and entomology while applying classroom lessons in a real world setting.

Beyond instruction, the program emphasizes service and entrepreneurship. Students will grow healthy, locally produced food to share with neighbors and sell through local farmers markets, reinforcing the role agriculture plays in food systems and community well being.

Tates Creek Middle School’s partnership with Kentucky State University expands learning opportunities from fourth grade through college, providing students with industry mentorship and peer to peer learning. KSU students and faculty will also gain leadership and mentoring experience through their involvement.

“It is awesome when good intentions have great outcomes. This is the perfect example where we have partners who are excited to come together and work together, and students who are truly interested and invested in the project,” said Dr. Marcus Bernard, dean of the College of Agriculture, Health, and Natural Resources and director of the Land Grant Program at KSU. “In this greenhouse we’re bringing aquaculture systems, hydroponic systems and traditional growing systems together to give students an array of opportunities to learn.”

Farm Credit Mid America serves more than 22,000 farmers in Kentucky. This year, the cooperative will invest up to \$5 million in programs and initiatives that align with its purpose to



Hydroponic plants grow in the new Greenhouse and Land Lab at Tates Creek Middle School



Eli Parham, agriculture teacher at Tates Creek Elementary School, speaks to attendees at the grand opening of the school's new greenhouse and land lab.

secure the future of rural communities and agriculture, with a strong focus on youth education and leadership development.

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