Lee County Students Visit ABAC’s Forest Lakes Golf Course

TIFTON—Ninety Lee County sixth graders took hands-on learning about soils and the environment to the next level in a recent visit to the Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College golf course.
The Lee County Middle School West students, along with their teachers Dolly Gill, Sharon King, and Audra Davis, took a field trip to ABAC’s Forest Lakes Golf Club to expand their knowledge about their recent soils curriculum.

"Forest Lakes Golf Club has entered into a partnership with the school to help the middle school classes grow a successful STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) program to incorporate into their learning,” said Austin Lawton, golf course superintendent. “In return, the golf course gains exposure in the South Georgia community. The trip was a great recruitment tool for the ABAC turfgrass program. We will continue this partnership for years to come."

During their visit, the students took a tour of the first couple of fairways and greens on the course to learn the basics of golf. They then visited different areas to learn more about the golf course and the turfgrass industry as a whole. Lawton headed up the area where students learned about career paths related to turf.

Other areas focused on technical questions related to turfgrass with Dr. James McCrimmon, ABAC Professor of Environmental Horticulture; various pieces of turf equipment used on a golf course with turfgrass majors and employees Brett Everett and Chris Termunde; and the environmental impact of growing turfgrass on a golf course with turfgrass major and employee Jay Harrelson. The visiting students also measured off an area to be re-sprigged with bermudagrass on the driving range and took soil samples of the driving range to return to their classroom to analyze.

“The students are working on a proposal to present to the golf course on planting an improved variety of turfgrass on the driving range,” Lawton said. “The driving range currently
has some bahiagrass, which is undesirable in many ways including its overall appearance, the
wear and tear it inflicts on the equipment, and the overall health of the driving range itself.

“Student turf majors at ABAC employed at Forest Lakes as well as students in the ABAC
turfgrass class labs plan to give the driving range an overhaul in August starting with taking out
the bahiagrass and planting bermudagrass. The new bermudagrass will grow in fully and quickly
as a result.”

Lawton said the second phase this winter will involve widening the driving range tee box
to allow more golfers to utilize the driving range tee. The irrigation on the driving range has
already been overhauled by turf students thanks to a donation of over $12,000 worth of irrigation
supplies from Hunter Golf, a Forest Lakes partner for over two years.

"This has been on our radar for quite some time due to the increase in golf classes that
use the tee box each semester and the recent return of the ABAC golf team utilizing the tee box
for daily practice," said Lawton.

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