

Bee Community



The two presidents of the bee club seniors Erin Dovey and Alyssa Rafferty taking care of their bees after school one afternoon. (Left) The two girls are observing the bees that are present on one of the combs from the hive. (Right) Senior Erin Dovey smoking the bees in the hive.

Two girls turn their loves for bees into a hobby

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To some, bees are seen as a nuisance. Unimportant to the environment. Maybe even nothing more than an insect that stings.

But seniors Erin Dovey and Alyssa Rafferty recognized otherwise and founded the Bee Club their freshman year at Wando.

"We're just trying to get students more involved in knowing about their environment. It's knowing about how other things are helping you," Rafferty said. [Bees] do so much for us with food that we don't even realize. You're not just buying food at the grocery store, other things are going into it."

Growing up with a mother who is a beekeeper and heavily involved in the bee community, Dovey believes this has definitely had an impact on her involvement in the Bee Club and community overall.

When the two girls started the club their freshman year, they had only two members- themselves, Rafferty recalls. In an effort to reach out to more people and educate those individuals about the importance of bees in the environment, the girls slowly began to talk to more people about Bee Club in addition to inviting friends, most of whom have since joined, she said.

"When teachers find out that I'm in Bee Club they're always like 'that's interesting and different,'" she said.

Some of those teachers purchase honey during the annual Charleston Honey and Bee Expo in April, one of the ways in which the club receives funding.

"We have just about tripled this year versus last year," Erin Dovey said.

"We have over 26-28 kids in the club. Every time we have a meeting there are new kids there. It's awesome. I kind of feel like this year the Bee Club has really taken off," Michelle Schanon-Dovey said.

Not only is Schanon-Dovey a beekeeper and founder of the Wando honey program for the special education department, she is also the sponsor of the Bee Club.

She began the bee club during the fifteen year period in which she taught at Wando.

"Initially what happened was this was supposed to be that bees were self sustaining enterprise for the special education department. So in creating the Bee Club, I was trying to incorporate some of the kids from the program with other kids. But that part of it didn't really come full circle," she said.

Yet the club still stands today although she is no longer at Wando.

"I'm currently out at Windwood Farms, 8 miles down the

road. I've been able to pull together all of the stuff I wasn't able to do at Wando, here."

Another one of the ways in which the Bee Club is able to prosper is through grants. The most recent grant applied for within the club was for a camera which attaches to the hive scale. The purpose of this camera is for onlookers to be able to watch the bees enter and exit the hive, Dovey said.

Prior to that, the Bee club received a grant for a hive scale, which sits under the hive and weighs it, allowing the ability to track when the bees go out when they bring pollen in, she said.

"The scale would be good for knowing when [the bees] are coming and going allowing us to know when is a good time to take care of them more and be more active with them and visit the hives," Rafferty said.

Schanon-Dovey says that she received the grant from Bosch, something she never imagined.

"It's [Bee Club] gotten a grant from Bosch for that hive scale, I never thought we would get that but we did. So it's like lets see what we can do with all of these kids."

She said that at Windwood farms, they have an observation hive that Bee Club is trying to get at Wando.

Rafferty said this hive would be something students can see in action, showing them that bees are important and lessen the fear-factor often associated with the insect.

"By going through the schools the kids even with the little kids, that's why they're putting the observation hives in all levels of education; kids get excited about it and take it home to their parents and then their parents are looking at labels of stuff they're putting down on the lawn. That's the kind of stuff that needs to happen," Schanon-Dovey said.

Sheer awareness.

Upgrades such as these made within the club and the community allow for furthered knowledge on these insects, Dovey said.

"We hope people will become more aware when they are educated," Rafferty said.

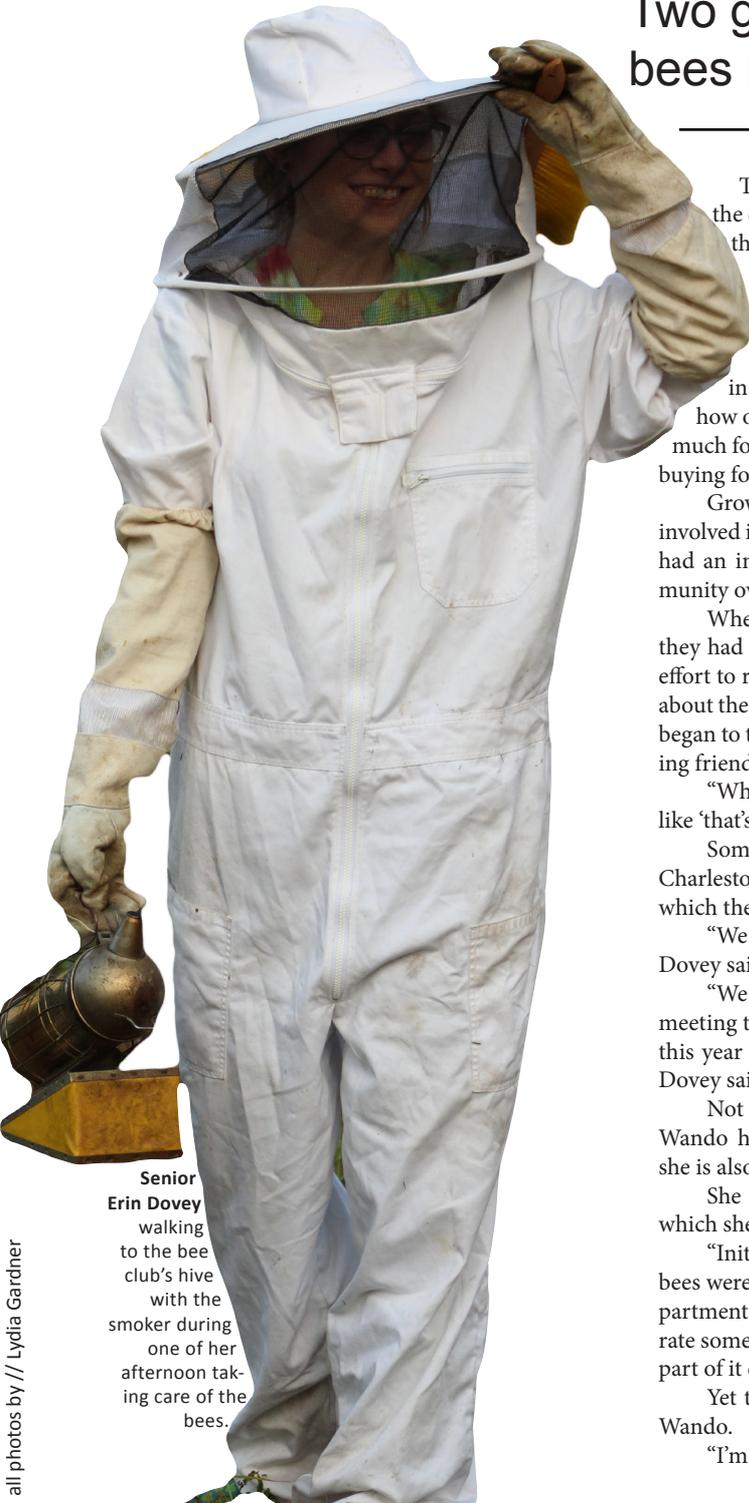
She also recognizes that there is a big bee presence in the area overall.

"I think it's really positive that there's a big bee community. Savannah Bee Company has a shop here and there is also a lady who's really involved in the bee cause. [Bees] have a big presence here, but also recently in Summerville [Dorchester County officials] sprayed for pesticides and killed all these bees. It's just important knowing about their presence but it's also good that they were there in the first place." Rafferty said.

Schanon-Dovey added that things such as this that are seen on the news help increase the club in members.

"It's just getting people interested because the bee population is definitely on a decline so anything you can do to help us not disappear would be great," Schanon-Dovey said.

"Bees only sting if they feel threatened," Dovey said.



Senior Erin Dovey walking to the bee club's hive with the smoker during one of her afternoon taking care of the bees.