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Students at Mingus Union High School say agricultural science and its National FFA Organization program remain strong .despite the departure of Heather Mulcaire

Mulcaire was a popular Career Technology Education teacher who led the agriculture section for years before resigning .over the summer

When the 2011-2012 school year started, Bethany Masters, 24, was appointed the section's sole teacher. She holds a master's degree in agricultural education. .She is also certified as a college instructor



Masters currently teaches six agricultural science classes: one for seniors, two for juniors, one for sophomores and two for freshmen. In addition, she spends time with her students outside class, teaching .responsibility and leadership through FFA activities

She worked for one school year with Mulcaire before being asked to step into Mulcaire's shoes in August. She said Mulcaire's help and guidance, which

.continues to the present day, prepared her for the job

I knew coming in that being a teacher is more than a job," Masters said. "It's a life. Thankfully, my boyfriend understands. " .He doesn't get to see me a lot these days

.Her love of animals got her started in the field. Her passion for teaching leadership skills is what keeps her motivated

".FFA is all about leadership," she said. "Leadership is always involved in every lesson I teach"

Through shared activities, agricultural science students learn how to gain trust, communicate clearly and be personable in .social situations, she said

She is breaking down stereotypes about agriculture science students, showing them how to reach out and be more involved .in their own high school community and also the community at large

.Judging by the reaction of her students, Masters appears to be succeeding in her second year at MUHS

".They're more than just farmers," Masters said. "We know most of them won't be going into agriculture after graduation"

.That's why teaching leadership, communication and personal responsibility is so important, she said

I want to be a wedding planner,” junior Charli Covey said. “I’m focusing on flower culture. The public speaking component “
”.is also going to help me when I’m ready to start my own business

Kyle Rex, a member of the MUHS FFA state champion aquaculture team, said the agricultural science program is preparing
.him for his future job as an Arizona Game and Fish Department officer

Rex had to learn how to identify dozens of fish by their proper Latin names in order to be a strong competitor in the FFA
.event. Masters stayed many days after school to quiz Rex with flash cards in order to get him ready

”.Masters] is the reason I won,” Rex said. “She made me study]“

MUHS junior McKenzie Mulcaire, Heather Mulcaire’s niece, admits she was very concerned about the transition at first, but
.Masters quickly put her fears to rest, she said

”.I was really worried. It’s a whopper to take on,” McKenzie Mulcaire said. “But I decided I would do what I could to help her“

.Mulcaire takes both of Masters’ junior classes and helps her as a classroom assistant

She’s just phenomenal,” Mulcaire said. “She’s doing an amazing job. There’s been some very positive changes since she “
”.took over

For one, MUHS administration is actively encouraging expansion of the agriculture program. The school is talking with
Masters about possibly creating new agriculture courses, in conjunction with Yavapai College, that will prepare students for
.entry into the wine industry, one of the fastest-growing industries in the Verde Valley