

# Feature Story

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service • 100 W. Capitol St.  
Ste 1321, Jackson, MS 39269 • Phone: (601) 965-5205 • Web: [www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ms.nrcs.usda.gov)

---

## High Tunnel Unites Citizens of South Mississippi Community

By Justin Fritscher  
NRCS Mississippi  
[justin.fritscher@ms.usda.gov](mailto:justin.fritscher@ms.usda.gov)

*Bond, Miss.* —Agronomists have studied the economic benefits provided by high tunnels, which allow farmers to defy weather and grow fresh fruits and veggies out of season. But what agronomists need to study next is how high tunnels can unify a community, like this one in south Mississippi.

A handful of community partners teamed up to build a high tunnel at the Deanash Campus of the Baptist Children's Village, which ministers to children in need of a nurturing home. The high tunnel was built in March, and since then, nearly 700 pounds of fruits and vegetables have been harvested.

"It's been very education for the kids," said Chad Sauls, the campus director. "We have enjoyed this high tunnel. If you have children, or if you have grandchildren, and you don't have this house right here, you should consider investing."

The 18 children that live in the home help work the high tunnel, which boasts lush, green walls of cucumbers, towering tomatoes and other summer favorites.

Partners on the project included the Baptist Children's Village, Deanash Campus, Mississippi Coastal Plains RC&D Council, Inc., Stone County Soil & Water Conservation District, MSU Extension Service, Mississippi Soil & Water Conservation Commission, NRCS Earth Team Volunteers, Our Daily Bread Food Pantry, World Changers Volunteers, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College, Perkinston Elementary School, Stone Elementary School, Croom's Nursery, Irrigation Mart, Carpenter's Pole & Piling, Gulf Coast Baptist Association, The Lightered Knot and local residents.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), also a partner, helped install an irrigation system to keep the plants watered during a drought now impacting south Mississippi.

The campus had the chance to showcase its high tunnel at a June field day attended by farmers in the Stone County area.

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

The NRCS supports the implementation of high tunnels because of the many benefits they provide. High tunnels are made of plastic or metal ribs and layered with plastic sheeting. High tunnels reduce use of pesticides and water and allow vegetables and fruits to be raised in colder temperatures.

“With NRCS support, high tunnels have been built across Mississippi,” Area Conservationist Wesley Kerr said. “We are in the second year of our high tunnel pilot study, and each day, we see more benefits from this program.”

While this high tunnel was not part of the NRCS high tunnel program, the agency gave technical assistance with irrigation and planting.

###

# Feature Story



*Monroe Mathis (second from right), NRCS district conservationist, explains the benefits of using a high tunnel to extend growing seasons at a June 2 field day at the Deanash Campus of the Baptist Children's Village.*



*Members of the Mt. Wade Baptist Church 4-H Youth Ministry learned about high tunnels at the June 2 field day at the Deanash Campus of the Baptist Children's Village.*

*Photos by Justin Fritscher, NRCS Mississippi*

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer