

Looking back on the past year, I can safely say one of my best decisions was enrolling in the MCBA New Beekeepers course to prepare for my first year of beekeeping. It was obvious from day 1 that the instruction, education, and hands-on experience would be invaluable to individuals, such as myself and my Dad, who have always been interested in bees but have little information on how to start managing hives.

The instructor, Mark Antunes, is a large part of what makes the classes engaging and, oftentimes, entertaining. He has spent countless hours creating the content he presents, and brings years of beekeeping knowledge and experience to the classroom. Mark and the assistant instructors clearly care a great deal about beekeeping, and their passion is contagious. In fact, I've now lost count of the times I've shared fun facts about bees with people in everyday life!

As I mentioned, there is plenty of hands-on experience as well. Starting with the third class, we began each meeting with an hour in the hives at the 4-H center to observe and participate in activities such as hive inspection, locating the queen, and sugar rolls. The time spent in the apiary was vital to see what was going on throughout the year, and provided time to ask questions about what was happening in the hives. We even got to help harvest honey over the summer!

Because of the education we received from this course, my Dad and I were able to successfully install two packages of honey bees in the spring and work with them throughout the summer and fall – fingers crossed for honey next year! We still constantly return to the notes we took, and reach out to Mark with questions (which he very generously takes the time to answer)! I cannot overstate the value of this class. It more than pays for itself by providing you with a strong foundation to get started, and the knowledge and support to continue working on your own hives. If you're ready to start keeping bees, or simply want to learn about them, this course is absolutely for you!

Galen Newsum 2018 MCBA Beginner Beekeeping Class