



NEW

Winter 2019

HORIZONS

*Do You Have
What it Takes
to Be a
Chapter Officer?*

PLUS: HELPING HAITI REBUILD, SWEET SUCCESS WITH MAPLE SYRUP, **SPACE FARMING** AND MORE

THE RISE OF ROBOTS IN AG



Merriam-Webster defines artificial intelligence (AI) as "the capability of a machine to imitate intelligent human behavior." It's a straightforward definition (though heaps of valid questions and risks are being explored) and one that describes a rising sector of agriculture. While they haven't taken over, robots have arrived in ag, as they have in many other consumer industries (think Apple's Siri, Amazon's Alexa, self-driving cars, predictive technology from Netflix, behavioral learning from thermostat company Nest and more), and developers are identifying ways the technology can improve farming practices.

"Artificial intelligence ... is increasingly being woven into agriculture, potentially making farming more productive, profitable and environmentally friendly," writes John Walter in "The Faces of Ag in AI," page 8. In that infographic, we share a few of the fascinating forms that enable AI as seen in fields, barns and food tech applications.

Agriculture is poised to reap the benefits of recent AI advances in machine-learning algorithms and computational power, says Brian David Johnson, a farm futurist. He anticipates that breakthroughs in the technology will help calculate what and where to plant based on big data and predictive analytics that take into account factors like weather, soil health and market conditions. Also, robotics will further automate our fields and barns.

Maybe your area of agriculture is already using AI, or maybe it will down the road. The possibilities are vast as we step into the future.

In this issue, you'll also find articles about chapters that harvest their own maple syrup, an Iowa chapter that traveled to Haiti to build a Sukup Safe T Home for a family in need, tips for aspiring chapter officers, a quiz of 2017 Census of Agriculture statistics and more.

Enjoy and have a wonderful winter!

Justin Davey

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THE FFA VISION

FFA is providing the next generation of leaders who will change the world.

THE FFA MISSION

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MISSION

Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resource systems.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The National FFA Organization affirms its belief in the value of all human beings and seeks diversity in its membership, leadership and staff as an equal opportunity employer.

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Global IMPACT

**A CALIFORNIA FFA CHAPTER CELEBRATES NATIONAL FFA WEEK 2019
BY RAISING FUNDS FOR IMPOVERISHED STUDENTS IN THE CONGO.**

To celebrate its chapter's first National FFA Week, the Temecula St. Jeanne Catholic FFA of Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac Catholic High School in Temecula, Calif., hosted a local event that had a global impact likely to be remembered and appreciated for years to come.

According to Marlisa Nordstrom, the Temecula St. Jeanne Catholic FFA Chapter advisor and National Teacher Ambassador for FFA, members felt passionate about engaging in a service project and wanted to do something that would benefit another St. Jeanne Catholic School. Members discovered they had a sister school in Central Africa's Democratic Republic of Congo, and after learning how much the Congolese depended on goats for adequate nutrition, they decided to organize an event raising funds to purchase goats for their peers across the globe.

The event took place on Feb. 23, 2019, and drew about 120 people. It featured a goat cheese discussion and tasting led by a local chef along with bread from an artisan baker, treats created by a specialty dessert chef and a wine tasting.

The Temecula St. Jeanne Catholic FFA raised \$2,000 from ticket sales, which was donated to its sister school and was used to purchase 50 goats.

"Our FFA program is brand-new – it just started in 2018 – so this event was a great opportunity to share our mission with members of the community while raising money so we could help others," Nordstrom says. "As a Catholic school, one of the pillars of our faith is service, so celebrating National FFA Week with a service project made perfect sense to our chapter. We plan to do something similar every year from now on."

– By Jessica Walker Boehm



The Temecula St. Jeanne Catholic FFA event raised funds for peers across the globe.

CALENDAR

First Monday of Each Month:

NEW LIVING TO SERVE CHAPTER CHALLENGE

Help us reach 930,000 hours of service by the 93rd National FFA Convention & Expo. Learn more by visiting FFA.org/LivingToServe.

Dec. 15:

SPRING SEMESTER-LONG LIVING TO SERVE GRANT APPLICATION OPENS

Semester-long grants provide chapters with up to \$1,200 per semester to implement a service-learning project in their community. Visit FFA.org/LivingToServe/Grants to apply.

Jan. 1:

NATIONAL FFA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE

Scholarships are sponsored by businesses and individuals and are handed out for a variety of experiences, career goals and higher-education plans. To apply, visit FFA.org/Scholarships.

Jan 1:

FFA WEEK DAY OF SERVICE MINI- GRANTS DUE

Chapters can receive a grant of up to \$400 to support their FFA Week service activities. To access the application, visit FFA.org/LivingToServe/Grants.

Feb. 22-29:

NATIONAL FFA WEEK

Celebrate alongside members from across the country. Find event ideas and resources at FFA.org/FFAWeek.

Feb. 25:

GIVE FFA DAY

Give now at donate.FFA.org to help prepare and inspire FFA members to become active leaders in agriculture.

Feb. 27:

ALUMNI DAY

Celebrate the important role alumni and supporters play in ensuring student and chapter success. Be sure to share your stories using [#FFAalumni](https://twitter.com/FFAalumni).

3 WAYS TO EASE A FRIGHTFUL FEBRUARY

There are many reasons to love the month of February as an FFA member. However, navigating the multitude of activities can require some extra support. Despite being the shortest month of the year, February is packed with activities, deadlines and events that can easily overwhelm even the most veteran of agriculture teachers. Fortunately, National FFA Alumni and Supporters have opportunities to step in and help carry the load. Here's how.

1. ASSIST IN PERSON

National FFA Week has been celebrated for more than 70 years. During this week, alumni and supporters can help brainstorm and pull off activities such as FFA breakfasts, community service events and much more.

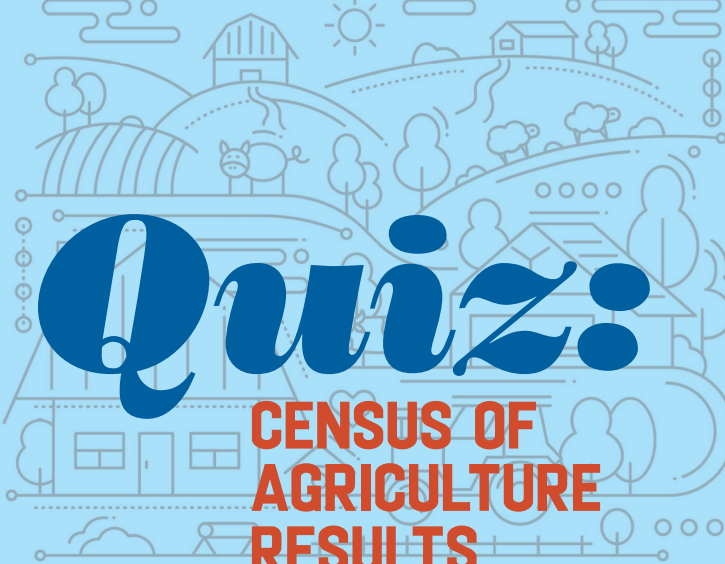
2. ASSIST FROM YOUR DESK

Everything from proficiency awards to letters of recommendations come due in February. Volunteering to proofread during this month can save students and teachers hours, and can offer a new set of eyes to these documents.

3. ASSIST FROM YOUR PHONE

Maybe you travel for work or need to spend time on the farm. Help your FFA chapter by making phone calls to local businesses to drum up support or to encourage local media to cover the great work being done in the school.

— By Bev Flatt



Quiz:

CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE RESULTS

There are more than 2 million farms and 3.4 million producers across the United States, but what do you really know about America's farms and ranches and the people who run them? The 2017 Census of Agriculture was released earlier in 2019, and some of the results may surprise you.

— By Jessica Mozo

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. More women are taking leadership roles on farms than ever before. In fact, there was a 27 percent increase in women producers from 2012. How many female farmers were there in 2017? | A. 57.5
B. 77.2
C. 1.23 million
D. 27
E. 370,000 |
| 2. What is the average age of all farmers in the United States? | |
| 3. Beginning farmers who have 10 or fewer years of experience are an average age of 46. What percentage of all producers were beginning farmers in 2017? | |
| 4. Cattle and calves were the top commodity by sales in 2017. How many billions of dollars did cattle and calves contribute to the agriculture industry that year? | |
| 5. How many producers either had served or were serving in the military in 2017? | |

Answers: 1. C, 2. A, 3. D, 4. B, 5. E

LIVING TO SERVE FOR THE *Holidays*

THIS TENNESSEE CHAPTER USES GRANT FUNDS TO COLLECT AND PURCHASE BOOKS FOR KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST-GRADE STUDENTS – JUST IN TIME FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON.

Putting the last line of the FFA motto, Living to Serve, into practice, the Grundy County FFA in Tennessee is helping promote child literacy across its school system.

The chapter received a \$400 Living to Serve Grant, sponsored by the National FFA Organization, in the fall of 2018 to support its mission of purchasing a book for each kindergarten and first-grade student in the Grundy County School District.

The effort, which was part of the Tennessee FFA Association's PLOW (Passing Literacy OnWard) program, resulted in the Grundy County FFA buying and distributing more than 260 books to each of the six Grundy County elementary schools in December 2018, just in time for the holiday season.

Members read to students in each kindergarten and first-grade classroom, too, which Grundy County FFA advisor Whitney Judd says was an important aspect of the chapter's initiative.

"Studies have shown that kids who are read to at a young age have a larger vocabulary and a higher literacy level than those who weren't read to," says Judd, who also serves as

the Grundy County High School agricultural education teacher. "Our chapter believes in the power of just one – in this case, just one book for each Grundy County kindergartener and first grader. We're hopeful our efforts will help these students grow into confident readers and speakers later in life. We plan to continue this project in the future, ideally distributing books in November during Tennessee Agriculture Literacy Week."

Interested in applying for your own Living to Serve grant? Visit FFA.org/LivingToServe.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm



Grundy County FFA members used a Living to Serve Grant to help promote child literacy.



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17. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
Julie Woodard, National FFA Organization

FUTURISTIC FARMING

THIS MEMBER IS PURSUING AN AGRICULTURE CAREER THAT IS OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Growing up, Grant Lach spent a lot of time outside viewing meteor showers, comets and lunar and solar eclipses. The out-of-this-world experiences fueled his passion for space and led Lach, 19, to major in astronomy and astrophysics at Ohio State University.

Lach, who was a member of the Bloom Carroll FFA in Carroll, Ohio, ran for the state officer team. Earning a spot changed his career plans. The college sophomore recognized there were opportunities to pursue both agriculture and outer space with a career as a space farmer.

"NASA is investing \$1.6 billion in the Artemis Project to take people to the moon by 2024," he says. "Agriculture is the corner of civilization, and if we're intending to continue to colonize places beyond Earth, it's important to figure out how to provide sustainable nutrition with limited resources on other planets."

Lach secured a coveted role on the social media team helping NASA promote its SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launch at Cape Canaveral. He hopes to make connections within the organization that will help him land a job after he graduates. He credits FFA with helping him identify a burgeoning career path.

"Being part of FFA and getting involved at deep levels opens your eyes to things other people might never know even existed," he says.

— By Jodi Helmer



GOLDEN FARMERS

AN FFA CHAPTER IN ILLINOIS CELEBRATES LOCAL FARMERS WHO'VE SPENT 50 YEARS IN THE FIELD.

An awards ceremony for farmers – that's what the Seneca FFA in Seneca, Ill., wanted to see. "In every other occupation, career milestones are marked with celebrations and gifts," says member Isaac Brockman. "Farmers, however, are never recognized for their longevity in a very challenging occupation."

FFA advisor Jeff Maierhofer's ag management class began talking about the idea, and "it just kind of morphed from there," Maierhofer says. The final plan: a Golden Farmers evening during National FFA Week 2019 honoring 16 farmers older than 70 who have been farming for more than 50 years. (One was 92 years old and still operating a combine.) The gift presented to each honoree read, "Farming: It's not just the way we make our living. It's the

way we make our life."

That sentiment is timeless. Even though decades and technological advancements separate the Seneca FFA members and their honorees, the level of commitment required remains the same. "You have to work hard and be dedicated to get the job done," Maierhofer says. "Hard work will never go away."

Neither will the pride. As the Golden Farmers tearfully shared their stories and answered FFA members' questions, "you could just see the pride these farmers had in their lives," Maierhofer says. "My students can't get that kind of emotion from a textbook."

Maierhofer says his chapter hopes to host similar events every five years, but he'd especially like to see other chapters follow suit to honor the Golden Farmers in their areas.

— By Lauren Denton



NATIONAL FFA OFFICER Q&A

YOUR TIME AS A NATIONAL FFA OFFICER CAME TO AN END AT THE 2019 NATIONAL FFA CONVENTION & EXPO. HOW WILL YOU CONTINUE YOUR FFA SERVICE AS AN ALUMNI?



Luke O'Leary



NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT

FFA prepares us for what's to come, no matter where that path takes us. Because of my experiences as an FFA

member, I am more confident to live authentically and follow my passions. I look forward to living a life of service and kindness in our world that truly needs it. FFA members are ready to bring that to our world, and I am excited to help them do that even without my blue corduroy.



Layni LeBlanc



NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY

I really enjoy the close-to-home impact of grassroots involvement. I plan on joining with my local

alumni chapter and working to strengthen our newer program, as well as share opportunities for our community supporters to get involved – even if they haven't worn the blue jacket.



Jordan Stowe



SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I'm excited to be a voice for the agriculture industry and to volunteer on the local level at FFA events to help members succeed!



Adrian Schunk



EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

Just because our time in the blue jacket ends, it doesn't mean our service has to end, as well. I am so excited to coach chapter-level CDE and LDE teams, assist with state convention, develop officers and build relationships at the local level as an alumni member. This type of

long-term impact reminds me there is so much to look forward to on this FFA journey!



Ridge Hugbanks



CENTRAL REGION VICE PRESIDENT

Serving as a national officer has been one of the most challenging and rewarding blessings I could have ever hoped to play a part in. I most look

forward to using the advocacy and networking skills gained through FFA to continue to advocate for this industry and this organization.



Shea Booster



WESTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

As a member, I benefited immensely from the mentorship of alumni members. Whether it was preparing for contests, working on my SAE or running for an office, having mentors strengthened my experience. I look forward to helping in a similar capacity.

AG 101 | THE FACES OF AG AI

Artificial intelligence (AI), the ability of machines to perform human tasks, is increasingly being woven into agriculture, potentially making farming more productive, profitable and environmentally friendly. "The world of robotics and AI is experiencing a boom time," says Brian David Johnson, a farm futurist.

Agriculture is poised to reap the benefits of recent AI advances in machine-learning algorithms and computational

power, Johnson says. Breakthroughs in the technology will help calculate what and where to plant, based on big data and predictive analytics that take into account factors like weather, soil health and market conditions, he says. Robotics will further automate our fields and barns.

Here are just a few of the fascinating forms that enable AI as seen in fields, barns and food tech applications.

- By John Walter • Illustration by Ben Fearnley

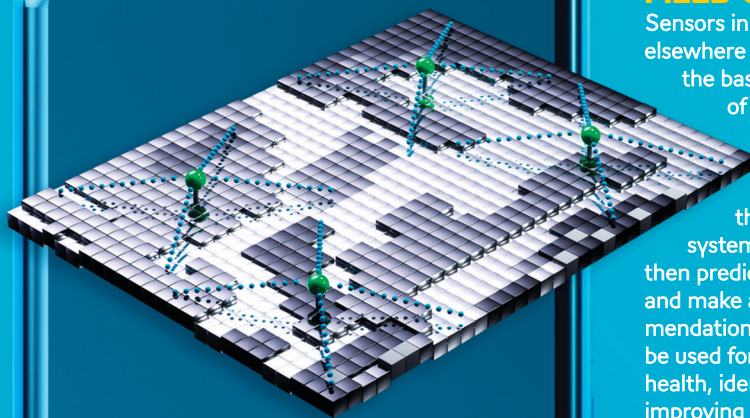
THE HUMAN BRAIN

Algorithms may be superior to humans in some calculations and chores, but natural thinking is still central to artificial intelligence applications. Companies on the cutting edge of AI are still relying on farmer know-how and are using experts to validate the information. "AI doesn't replace human knowledge; it augments it," say Microsoft FarmBeats developers, who are building unique solutions to solve global food-production issues using low-cost sensors, drones, and vision and machine-learning algorithms. (See the Q+A with a Microsoft chief scientist.)



FIELD SENSORS

Sensors in crop fields and elsewhere on the farm do the basic intelligence of gleaning soil, crop, weather and other info that is fed into the brain of an AI system. Algorithms can then predict crop conditions and make agronomic recommendations. Sensors can be used for assessing crop health, identifying weeds, improving irrigation, detecting pests and microorganisms, and performing other agronomic chores.



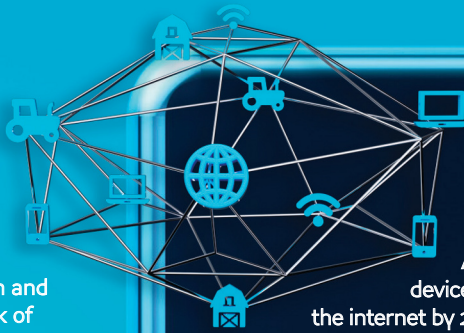
EYES IN THE SKY

Unmanned air vehicles, or drones, provide a bird's-eye view of farm fields and generate images of crops and soils. They also leverage AI to monitor crop health, improve yields and cut costs. Drones are becoming an increasingly common implement on farms, with the market expected to reach \$480 million in the next decade. Satellite machine vision applications are being developed for forecasting weather, analyzing crop health, predicting crop yields and more.



BIG DATA

Artificial intelligence, like a brain, needs information in order to think. Data is the lifeblood of AI. In agricultural applications, AI processes data, such as weather, plant health and soil types, to do its work of learning and making predictions for farmers.

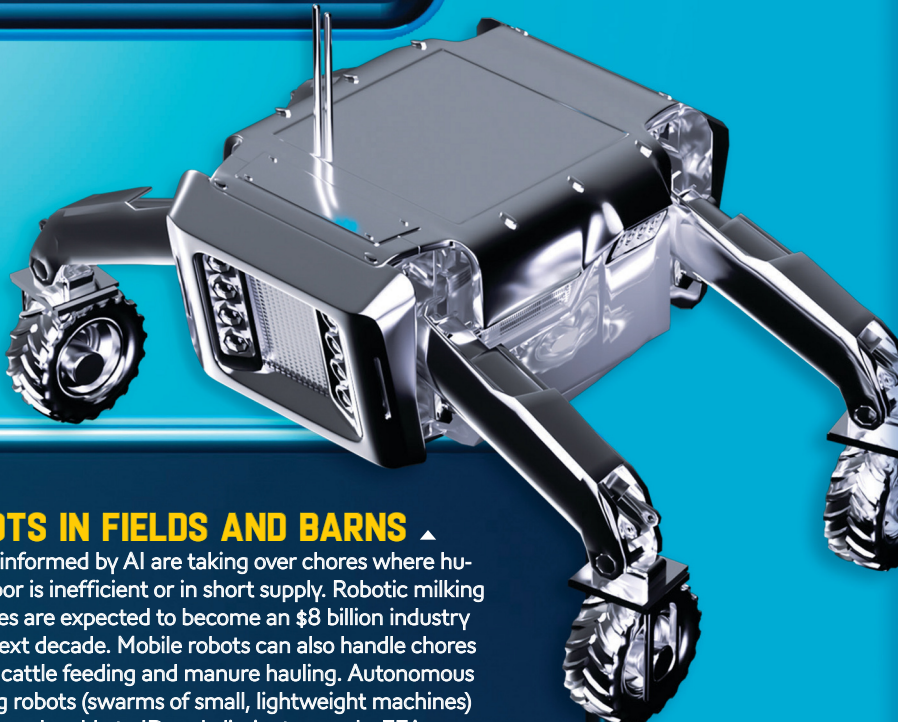
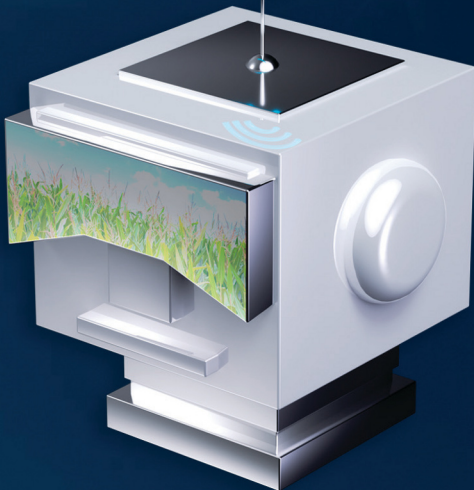


INTERNET OF THINGS

An estimated 20 billion devices will be connected to the internet by 2020, including many on farms and ranches. Artificial intelligence is needed to organize connected objects and to make sense of the immense amount of data streamed from the devices. Sensor-equipped devices in ag are increasingly capable of knowing what's happening on the land and responding intelligently.

MACHINE VISION

Automated equipment, such as field robots, uses machine vision for guidance. In livestock production, the technology can be used to identify livestock and to monitor growth. Machine vision systems are used to identify and categorize crops. When machine vision is combined with deep learning, it can identify which crops should be shipped to local markets and which can handle a longer journey. FFA sponsor Allflex Livestock Intelligence is working with machine vision.



ROBOTS IN FIELDS AND BARNES

Robots informed by AI are taking over chores where human labor is inefficient or in short supply. Robotic milking machines are expected to become an \$8 billion industry in the next decade. Mobile robots can also handle chores such as cattle feeding and manure hauling. Autonomous weeding robots (swarms of small, lightweight machines) might soon be able to ID and eliminate weeds. FFA sponsors AGCO and John Deere are working with robotics.

AI Q+A:

Ranveer Chandra,
Chief Scientist, Microsoft

Q: What are the key components of artificial intelligence in agriculture?

A: They would be sensors, drones, satellites and the ability to combine all of them.

Q: What is most special about Microsoft FarmBeats?

A: FarmBeats enables the collection of large amounts of data from the farm and applies new artificial intelligence and machine-learning algorithms to predict farm conditions. It uses the TV white spaces and the IoT Edge [a service that allows users to analyze data on devices on the edge of the cloud] to overcome the challenges of farm connectivity.

Q: What is the FarmBeats program with FFA?

A: The FarmBeats Student Kits in use by FFA are a for-student adaption of FarmBeats that is allowing students to learn the same technology as working agriculturists.

Q: Has the Student Kits program with FFA been successful?

A: The program has just begun, and there is a lot of excitement about its potential. The response from FFA chapters has been overwhelming, as they have shared many creative ideas on using the kits. Agriculture is headed toward a data-driven future, and Microsoft is committed in our partnership with FFA to help achieve this future.

HELP

This page: Members of the Audubon FFA Chapter in Iowa traveled to Haiti to help rebuild after Hurricane Matthew. The team partnered with GoServe Global to build a Sukup Manufacturing Safe T Home for a family in need.
Right page: The family's previous shelter.





HAITI

Members of the AUDUBON FFA IN IOWA traveled to Haiti to BUILD SHELTER and HOPE for a family in need.

Story by
JUSTIN DAVEY

On the afternoon of Jan. 12, 2010, a magnitude 7.0 earthquake struck Haiti, a small country that shares an island with the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean, about 700 miles southeast of Key West, Fla. With approximately 3 million people affected, this earthquake was the most devastating natural disaster ever experienced in Haiti. As a result, the country faced the greatest humanitarian need in its history.

Unfortunately, Haiti is no stranger to hardship. Natural disasters and their effects dot the country's history. More recently, Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti on Oct. 4, 2016, as a Category 4 hurricane with torrential rain, massive storm surge and winds up to 145 mph. Death tolls and damage reports rose rapidly in the days following its landfall, characterizing Hurricane Matthew as the largest humanitarian emergency in

Haiti since 2010.

Last December, eight members of the Audubon FFA Chapter in Audubon, Iowa, along with advisor Brittany Elmquist and her husband, Joe, traveled to Les Cayes, Haiti, to help rebuild. The team partnered with GoServ Global, a disaster relief and community development nonprofit organization, to build a Sukup Manufacturing Safe T Home for a family in need.

The chapter built on the experiences of former members who visited Haiti five years earlier. "Six years ago, we were at the state FFA convention in Iowa, and the Sioux Central FFA Chapter had a display and some information for students about building a Safe T Home in Haiti," Elmquist says. "I had two students go to that presentation, and they came up to me afterward and said, 'Mrs. Elmquist, we're going to Haiti. We need to go to Haiti.' And I said, 'OK.' I think they were completely surprised with that answer. We knew we'd have some research to do, but that's what started it. They went five years ago, and here we are today."

Community involvement is what made the trip become reality.

"Audubon is a very supportive community, and our family and friends and community stepped up to the plate and helped out immensely," Elmquist says. The chapter held a fun donkey basketball game fundraiser (a basketball game played while riding donkeys) and a silent auction, and each student received sponsorships.

In essence, a Sukup Safe T Home is a modified grain bin that serves as a home and shelter in developing countries. It has galvanized steel walls; 254 square feet of interior space; an interior loft; ballast boxes; a heat-shielded, ventilated roof that keeps the interior cool; a lockable steel door and windows that provide safety and more – all of which help improve the quality of life.

"We know from the [previous] hurricanes that they can withstand [hurricanes], and they





Audubon FFA members visit the Village of Hope, a development of Sukup Manufacturing Safe T Homes in Haiti.

Watch Our Video

Point your phone's camera at this icon to experience more of the Audubon FFA Chapter's trip to Haiti, or visit FFA.org/Haiti.



can provide a safe place for this family to be," Elmquist says.

FAMILY TIES

Given the Safe T Home's close proximity to the recipient's existing shelter, the team had an opportunity to interact with the homeowner and his children. It was an experience that made a mark on each of them.

"I love this family," Elmquist says. "It means a lot now that we know them. We've seen the father and his five sons, and his sons were so eager to help and they wanted to learn how to help. You could see that they couldn't wait for us to be done with this house so they could

move in. It was pretty awesome."

"They knew we were here to build a home for them, but they couldn't just sit back," adds alumnus Nolan Smith. "They were up helping and trying to do as much as they could. I just think that's awesome."

"There's a sense of pride there. They wanted to be a part of their house," says Grace Christensen, who was a high school senior at the time of the trip. "The father was very grateful. Through his eyes and tone of voice, you could definitely tell that we were making an impact, and I think that's so cool."

Along with his five young sons, Safe T Home recipient Vainceur Prosper had been through a very devastating

and traumatic season of life. His wife passed away two years ago, and in the middle of that grief, he had to find a way to provide for his family as a single parent. Then Hurricane Matthew made landfall.

He recalls his feelings as the hurricane approached. "It was a terrible time. I had my kids lie down on the bed, then a wall fell. God did an amazing thing for us. God saved us."

Needless to say, Prosper is thankful for this new chapter.

"The kids were very excited to see the house go up," he says. "They said, 'Daddy, we're so happy!' God is doing a good thing for us, and we're so happy for that."

"We feel comfortable now because we

have a good house,” he adds. “I give God thanks, and I thank this team.”

A DIFFERENT KIND OF WORK

In addition to the Safe T Home build, the Audubon team visited orphanages in the area where they played with the children and did repair and maintenance projects on the grounds.

“We were able to see all the different projects GoServ Global has been a part of, and a large part of that is the orphanages,” Elmquist says. “The team visited four different orphanages and enjoyed every minute of learning from the children.” The team decided to sponsor a Haitian boy named Paul, and they made him an Audubon FFA member at their annual chapter banquet in March.

“We played with the kids, which you’d think is a small thing to do, but when you get there and they all run up to you, you just feel how excited they are to have attention,” Christensen says. “We did come down here to work, and that is work – playing with the kids and embracing them makes a difference, too.”

The team also learned how agriculture is done in Haiti. “Some of our students got to plow with cattle in front of them, which was entertaining – I think more for the Haitians than for us – but we also got to see the rice paddy fields

and how things are done there,” Elmquist says.

“It was really cool to try to do some things the way they do,” Smith says. “Normally, if we need to plow, we’ll hop in the tractor and throw the plow in the ground, but it was a lot tougher to do there.”

OPEN EYES

Over the course of the week, team members began to realize that some of the most meaningful experiences in life come when they step out of their comfort zones.

“I think there’s a lot we can learn from other cultures,” Smith says. “We don’t really need everything to be happy. It’s a mind-set we have to have for ourselves.”

“When I first got there, my impression of the Haitians was that they’re so resilient,” Christensen says. “They go through so much and they just keep going. They don’t let anything stop them.”

“Part of the FFA motto is Living to Serve, which I think was big when we came to Haiti,” Christensen adds. “We’re serving and we’re being submerged in the culture. We’re getting to

live through serving, and I think that’s very important.”

In the end, through this experience, Elmquist hopes her students realize how important they are and all they have to offer. “The students who are here are leaders,” she says. “Their experience in FFA has really provided them with that premier leadership that FFA strives for, and they believe in something. They believe in themselves, they believe in the future of agriculture and they believe in the people. FFA has prepared them to be able to work hard. They’re not afraid to get their hands dirty, and they’re not afraid to take that initiative and to be leaders and step up.” •



Sukup



GoServ Global

More Resources

To learn more about Sukup Safe T Homes, visit Sukup.com. For more information about GoServ Global, visit GoServGlobal.org.



Left: Safe T Home recipient Vainceur Prosper with his five sons. This photo: Audubon FFA advisor Brittany Elmquist spends time at a local orphanage.



PREMIER *leadership*

Megan Nunes has an interesting piece of advice for those looking to make waves in agriculture: “Don’t be afraid to explore other industries.”

Leaving agriculture, though more accidental than intentional, led her to find the solutions she offers the industry today. The former California regional FFA officer currently sits at the top of San Francisco-based Vinsight, a forecasting software company for grape and almond crops. She started the company in 2015 after eight years in satellite imaging.

Having grown up in a farming family in California’s Central Valley, Nunes majored in dairy science at Cal Poly with plans to become a lawyer to help improve air and water quality in the dairy industry. Around the same time that she discovered law was not for her, she started working part time at an aerospace company. “That completely changed my path,” Nunes says.

“I became enamored with this new world. I thought I’d always be very involved in agriculture. Then I took this part-time job and thought I’d stay in aerospace.”

It turns out she could incorporate both. While analyzing data sets created by satellite imagery, Nunes began to question how this technology could improve agriculture. “My curiosity catapulted me,” she says. “I wanted to be a part of that shift in the future of agriculture. I wanted to give back.”

She quit her job as a chief operating officer and spent six months brainstorming a business idea. In that time, she discovered a need for more actionable data for high-value specialty crops, and Vinsight was born. Launched exclusively with

grapes (thanks to a partnership with a local orchard), Vinsight analyzes satellite imagery, weather trends and historical yield data to predict yields. The company now also services almonds and will have eight crops, including walnuts, strawberries and hops, next growing season.

Starting her own business has had “a lot of peaks and valleys,” Nunes says. One of the biggest challenges: overcoming farmers’ skepticism. “Getting customers to share yield data was a big ask. But from the beginning, we have built our company on the core values of trust, transparency, not overpromising or underdelivering. Building that

kind of relationship with our customers has allowed us to get to this point. Our customers are incredibly happy.”

What’s not much of a challenge is being a woman. “Don’t let gender bias influence your

capabilities,” she says. “I grew up one of four girls, and my parents told us we could do anything we wanted to. Gender doesn’t play a role in my importance.” Instead, Nunes attributes her success to grit, determination, confidence, a strong support system, insatiable curiosity and “being scrappy and a problem solver” — all leadership traits she developed through her years in FFA.

“I was very active in FFA in my early high school years, and that is the time we develop our character and formulate our own ideas,” Nunes says. “Because I had so many teachers and mentors pour into me, that foundation gave me a jump-start and propelled me forward. FFA really is a rare resource that sets you apart in the working world.”

**“DON’T LET
GENDER BIAS
INFLUENCE YOUR
CAPABILITIES.”**
— MEGAN NUNES

CHARTING *Her* PATH

A detour from agriculture gave CEO Megan Nunes the insight she needed to help improve it.

— By Lauren Denton

LIVING THE AMERICAN DREAM

NORTH CAROLINA FFA ALUMNUS HELPS GROW FAMILY NURSERY DESPITE HARD TIMES.

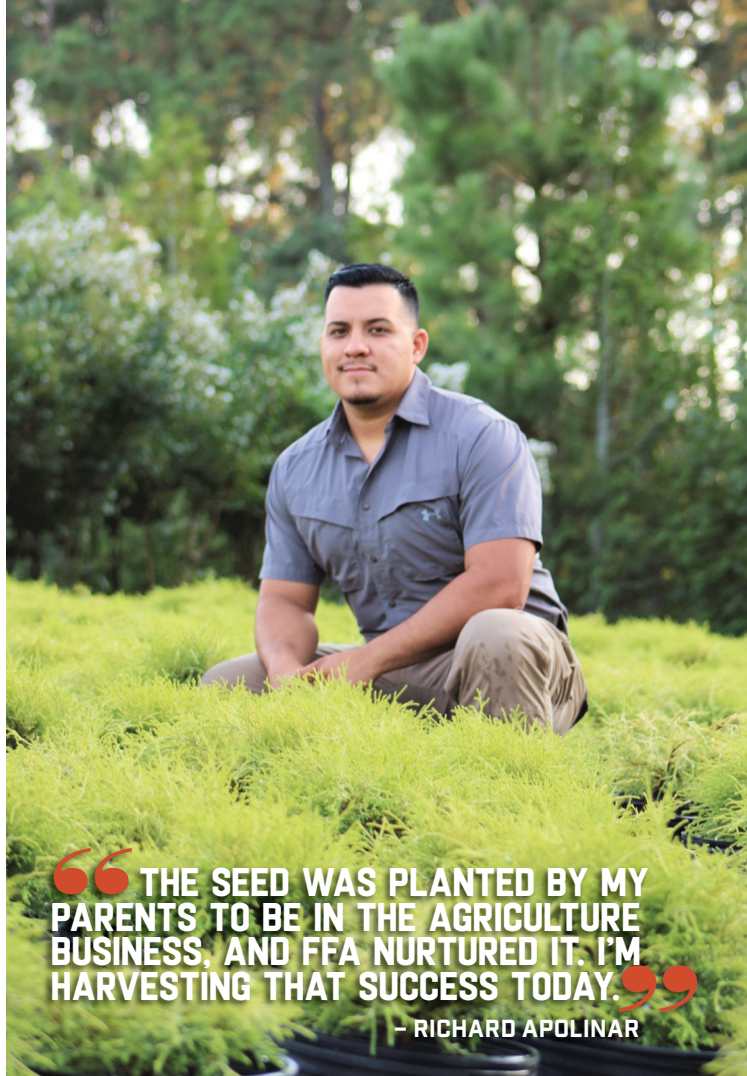
You might say former North Carolina FFA member Richard Apolinar is living the American dream. His parents, Camilo and Juliana, emigrated to the United States from Mexico and started C&J Nursery, a thriving family business in Angier, where Apolinar works full time.

“I’m the first generation in my family to be born in the U.S.,” says Apolinar, 28. “My parents are both very involved in our business, and we have about 14 workers total, including some seasonal workers from Mexico. Dad is the leader who organizes us all and tells us what needs done. My younger sister, Jessica, also works for our business.”

The nursery has grown from 35 acres in 2006 to about 100 acres today and specializes in trees, shrubs and flowers. But for the Apolinar family, success didn’t come easy. The economic recession from 2007 to 2009 caused many businesses to close, but the agriculture-loving Apolinar family managed to survive by sacrificing and continuing to invest in their business.

Apolinar graduated from West Johnston High School in 2010 and decided to join the family business after completing law enforcement training. He got married in 2012 to his high school sweetheart, Antonia. A few years later, tragedy struck.

“My older brother, Camilo Jr., was a great businessman



“THE SEED WAS PLANTED BY MY PARENTS TO BE IN THE AGRICULTURE BUSINESS, AND FFA NURTURED IT. I’M HARVESTING THAT SUCCESS TODAY.”

— RICHARD APOLINAR

who was a leader in our family business,” Apolinar says. “I looked up to him. He was one of the reasons I joined FFA. I admired him wearing his blue jacket. But he passed away in a motorcycle accident in June 2015.”

Camilo Jr. was only 26 when he died.

“It was a tough blow to our family and our business,” Apolinar says. “Life brings a lot of things you don’t expect. But we kept on working hard, and we’re here today. We’re thankful for all the blessings we have.” Among those blessings are three beautiful daughters, ages 5, 3 and 18 months old.

He credits his experience at West Johnston FFA for giving him skills that help him succeed in his career today.

“The seed was planted by my parents to be in the agriculture business, and FFA nurtured it. I’m harvesting that success today,” he says. “FFA helped me learn to be organized, to be a leader for our workers, to be assertive and professional, and to know all the aspects of my job so I can be in command.”

FFA also equipped him with opportunities to network with other agriculture businesses across North Carolina.

“In agriculture, we all work as one at the end of the day,” he says. “We all need each other.”

— By Jessica Mozo





HOW TO BECOME A CHAPTER OFFICER



DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

YOU PROBABLY DO! GET 12 TIPS FROM FIVE NATIONAL TEACHER AMBASSADORS FOR FFA WHO HAVE GUIDED MORE THAN 700 CHAPTER OFFICER CANDIDATES AND INTERVIEWED MORE THAN 300 OF THEM DURING THEIR 71 COLLECTIVE YEARS OF TEACHING.

BY JAMI STALL • PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY WILLIAM DUKE

1

STAND OUT.

“Tell your story. When I interview officer candidates, I want to know about them, about a time when they’ve been a leader,” says Josh Bondy, an advisor at Paris FFA in Paris, Mo. “I preach and preach to students: You must be memorable. You need to be able to tell the judges something about yourself that

makes you stand out from other candidates.”

2

BE YOURSELF.

“I’ve had everyone from valedictorians to students who were in the bottom 10 percent of their class [academically] who’ve been great chapter officers,” says Abby Readshaw, FFA advisor at Four County Career

Center in Napoleon, Ohio. “The main thing you must demonstrate is your desire and will to do it. I can help with the technical stuff, but you have to want to do it.”

Readshaw says students who can stand to improve academically can still be exceptional chapter officers if they excel socially. “If you know how to get up in front of people and help run an

FFA meeting, and you understand how to guide your peers vs. telling them what to do, you will do well.”

3

BE A LEADER.

“You don’t have to be the world’s best public speaker. You can also be a quiet leader,” says Jodi Riedel, FFA advisor at Wakefield High School, in Raleigh, N.C. “You need



“IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT RUNNING FOR A POSITION, JUST DO IT. YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE, BUT YOU HAVE EVERYTHING TO GAIN”

★ **ABBY READSHAW**

to be driven, creative, able to work well with the team and be a really good communicator. But there are also remarkable chapter officers who aren't comfortable in front of a crowd.”

Riedel says their chapter secretary is originally from Kenya, and though presenting in front of an audience remains a bit overwhelming for her, her organizational skills and keen attention to detail make her a perfect fit on the officer team.

Bondy agrees. “If you're not a polished speaker, don't

let that stop you. Those skills will come.”

4

MIND YOUR P's.

Leasa Gudderra, the advisor at Gwynn Park FFA in Brandywine, Md., reminds hopeful chapter officers of the Five P's: proper preparation prevents poor performance.

If you're planning to run for chapter officer, she recommends finding out the required duties for that position. Then prepare for your interview and create a brag sheet, or resume,

to share with the panel when you are interviewed. You can even use the FFA Resume Generator at [FFA.org/Resume](https://ffa.org/Resume). Gudderra's candidates have panel interviews, during which they're asked to share their interest in the office, discuss their participation in a team activity and then answer multiple interview questions.

5

KNOW THE FAQs.

The interview process can trip up even the most enthusiastic candi-

dates who are unprepared. Riedel strongly suggests visiting [FFA.org](https://ffa.org) to download the Sample Officer Interview Questions. Review them, consider how you'd respond to each and then practice answering them.

6

WORK AS A TEAM.

“You need to check your ego at the door and understand that being a chapter officer isn't about the title,” says Kevy Mendes, FFA advisor at Exeter Union High School in Exeter, Calif. It shouldn't matter what posi-



tion you have; you're part of a team first. If you're willing to work hard to get the job done and have some grit, you can accomplish anything."

Mendes says there's a place for everybody in FFA, and it takes a lot of different personalities and leadership styles to accomplish the goals of chapter officers. "I tell my officer team, 'One person can't make something extraordinary; it takes multiple people to do that. Embracing other people's strengths and weaknesses and building others up is how to reach your goal and have success.'"

7 PUT IN THE TIME.

Being a chapter officer requires more FFA involvement, but the amount varies from one chapter to the next. Riedel recommends you find out the commitment expected and decide if you have the time it takes. Her officer team puts in five additional hours a week, on average. "There's a lot going on when you're in high school — activities, sports, jobs, relationships, family commitments and a lot of drama; it's high school," she says. "You can't have it all, so you have to make decisions based on your priorities. During the interview, if you tell us your top priority is FFA, then you need to be true to that."

However, advisors encourage their officers to manage their time to include other activities. "We want our students to be involved in a lot of other things so they're more well-rounded students," Mendes says. "We help them adjust schedules to make this happen when we can."

"We never want to bombard them with so much activity that they can't do

other things beyond FFA," Bondy adds.

8 JOB SHADOW.

Not sure if you're right for the role? Shadow your chapter's officers to get a better feel for what they do. "Let your advisor know as soon as you think you might be interested in running," says Bondy. "Then reach out to current officers and become involved in every FFA activity they do. Ask for additional responsibilities. At the end of an event, if they stay to sweep floors, pick up a broom and do the same, or whatever the task may be."

9 BE A TEAM PLAYER.

Riedel says advisors want to be confident that you can work well in a group. "FFA is not run by the president alone. It is run by the entire officer team, so you should be able to show us you are team-oriented," she says. "Playing sports or being in organizations like the Boy Scouts are good examples. A perfect way to also become part of the competition process would be a career development event."

10 EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED.

Chapter officers have admitted they didn't realize all they would enjoy in their roles prior to election. "Our members are prepared for the commitment and work involved, but they're shocked at how much fun they have," Bondy says.

According to Mendes, it's an eye-opener for some chapter officers to learn all the behind-the-scenes planning that goes into hosting

"YOU NEED TO CHECK YOUR EGO AT THE DOOR AND UNDERSTAND THAT BEING A CHAPTER OFFICER ISN'T ABOUT THE TITLE."

★ KEVY MENDES

a successful meeting. "Many officers lead from behind (not in the spotlight) to ensure things get done. Some members think being an officer is about leading the group and posing in pictures."

11 JUST DO IT!

"If you are thinking about running for a position, just do it. You have nothing to lose, but you have everything to gain," says Readshaw. "It sounds cheesy, but it's true. It just comes down to 'Are you willing to do it for your chapter, or do you want other people to do it for you?'"

12 IF NOT ELECTED, KEEP TRYING.

"I tell the students we have to prepare for that," says Bondy. "We talk about what they are going to do the next morning and what's that going to look like if they don't get elected. They'll say, 'The next morning the sun will come up, I will go to school and I'll start over.'"

Gudderra has wise advice for members who aren't

elected. "Although this wasn't the right time, that does not mean it will always be that way," she tells them. "It's important to know that you did your best and you are now better prepared to try again next time."

Mendes sees it as a learning experience for FFA members. "Don't let this deter you from doing anything in FFA," she says. "Try again; take more opportunities. One election does not define you. There are plenty of adults in the world who go to job interviews and don't get hired, and they still have to go to more interviews. It's about figuring yourself out, trying harder and making yourself better so the next time you're a stronger candidate."

Riedel also recommends trying again but starting with something smaller like becoming a committee chairperson. "That way, you'll come back and have a new success on your resume that you can talk about in your next interview. Don't give up; see it as a growth opportunity," she says. •





SWEET SUCCESS

FFA CHAPTERS PRODUCE MAPLE SYRUP TO HONOR LOCAL AGRICULTURAL TRADITIONS.

Even though fourth-generation sugarmaker Henry Sarafin had been helping boil sap into syrup on his family farm in Chesterfield, Mass., he still looked forward to taking a sugaring class at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.

“I wanted to help teach other FFA members about sugaring and get them to feel as excited about it as I do,” he says.

The sugaring class at the school includes lessons on forest management, syrup production, sales and marketing. Students are responsible for all aspects of the process, from tapping trees and collecting sap to boiling it into syrup and selling the finished product. It also engages students in an age-old agricultural tradition.

American sugarmakers collected sap from 13.3 million taps and produced more than 4.24 million gallons of maple syrup last year, according to the United States Department of Agriculture. Several FFA chapters in the Northeast have established their

own forest of sugar maple trees, known as a sugarbush, to learn about the rewards and challenges of making their own maple syrup.

Jim Anspach, agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, believes sugaring classes and hands-on work in the sugarhouse expose students to math, science, business, history and environmental studies while keeping a New England tradition alive.

“Sugaring is a good transition from the classroom,” he says. “It gets students outside to do something cool and helps them understand the hard work that goes into making maple syrup.”

STICKY SITUATIONS

In Whitefield, N.H., the sap runs for less than six weeks, and Paradise FFA members at White Mountains Regional High School work at a frenzied pace to collect sap from 300 trees and boil it down in their on-site sugarhouse, a small cabin where the

BY JODI HELMER

PASS THE SYRUP

Here are just a few of the FFA chapters that operate sugarhouses to teach students about the intricacies of forest management, tapping trees, collecting sap, along with producing and marketing maple syrup.

The **WOODBURY FFA CHAPTER AT NONNEWAUG HIGH SCHOOL IN WOODBURY, CONN.**, started tapping trees in 1989. Agriculture teacher and FFA advisor

George Lyman works alongside students to produce 25 gallons of maple syrup each season. In addition to making maple syrup, students learn about the science, math, forest management and Native American history that are essential elements of the iconic agricultural product.

The sugaring operation at **VERNON VERONA SHERRILL HIGH SCHOOL IN VERONA, N.Y.**, has

grown tremendously since its inception, according to Sara Ouellette, agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. Last season, students tapped 750 trees in the school sugarbush and sourced sap from FFA alumni to produce 2,000 gallons of maple syrup – a school record. The syrup is sold retail by FFA members to a large base of community members and is sold wholesale to local stores and restaurants.

Several FFA members at **NORTHWESTERN REGIONAL SCHOOL IN WINSTED, CONN.**, have started SAEs or small businesses after learning the art of sugaring. Erick Wildes, agriculture teacher and FFA advisor, oversees production. Students collect sap from 75 taps on school grounds and tap additional trees throughout the community, including nonprofits and land owned by FFA alumni. In addition to syrup, the chapter makes confections such as maple candy.



a lot about how finicky the season can be and how many hands it takes to get maple syrup from tap to table. They also get to see how much community support there is for agriculture.”

PROUD OF THE PRODUCT

Peterson admits that fellow FFA chapter members teased him for carrying around a pint of syrup and spoons at the National FFA Convention & Expo and encouraging FFA members from other schools

Top right: Former Paradise FFA Chapter president Dustin Peterson checks the syrup's density. Members here collect sap from 300 trees and boil it down in their on-site sugarhouse. Below: Wamogo FFA members work in the sugarbrush. The chapter taps 100 trees on campus.

maple sap is boiled. FFA Alumni Dustin Peterson, 20, and Cloe Bean, 18, often worked late into the evenings to keep the evaporator running.

“The season is short and intense,” says agriculture teacher and FFA advisor Jenn Scarinza. “You are trying to seize a very fleeting opportunity when Mother Nature dictates, and you have to work together to get it done.”

At Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, even alumni pitch in during sugaring season.

Students collect sap in buckets, hanging from up to 40 sugar maple trees on campus, but the school lacks its own sugarhouse to process the sap into syrup. Students boil some of the sap over an open fire, which ensures that FFA members get hands-on

experience. Most of the sap is transported to a local sugarhouse, where an FFA Alumni member boils it down and bottles it for the chapter. The chapter collects 350 gallons of sap and produces an estimated nine gallons of syrup.

“Most of the students in our program do not come from ag backgrounds,” Anspach says. “They learn

to try a sample. The former state officer took the good-natured ribbing in stride because he is proud of the work Paradise FFA members did to produce their own maple syrup.

“I spent so many hours after school tending to a fire just to make three extra gallons of syrup,” he recalls. “I wanted to show off our hard work and introduce FFA members to the concept of real maple syrup.”

Local communities get excited about the operations, too. The Wamogo FFA in Litchfield, Conn., taps 100 trees on campus and boils it in an oil-fired evaporator. A local sugarmaker helps out with technical issues and problem-solving during the process.

The finished syrup is sold in the on-campus ag store, where parents, staff and neighbors stock up on the sweet confection, and the revenue from syrup sales supports FFA events and scholarships.

Following the journey from production to consumption helps students learn the realities of agricultural production, according to assistant principal and FFA advisor Charles Rowland.

“The entire production is student-driven; the teachers keep things running in the right direction, but students do all the work,” Rowland says. “They see how much work goes into producing a single gallon of syrup.”





Some students take their devotion to maple syrup to the next level. Peterson created a business plan for a maple syrup operation for his capstone project and hopes to put it into practice when he starts his own sugaring operation in the future.

Sarafin also pursued sugaring for his supervised agricultural experience. He started with 25 taps on his family farm and grew his operation to 100 taps while learning about working more efficiently and running a streamlined operation. He joined the family farm when he graduated from Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School in 2018,

and he continues applying the lessons he learned in the classroom (and out in the sugarbush) in his operation.

Back at Paradise FFA, Bean led tours for school groups, which she believes got students excited about coming to high school. The sugaring operation also gave FFA members a taste of possible career options after graduation.

"Maple syrup is a booming industry around here," Scarinza says. "New taps are going in all the time and [sugarmakers] need good help. It's a fun class, but there is also a potential future in it." •

Clockwise from top left: Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School FFA member Connor Pfalzgraf in the sugarbush. Cloe Bean taps a tree. Wamogo FFA members in the sugarbush. Former national officer Valerie Earley makes treats with Paradise FFA members.

MAKING MAPLE SYRUP

CURIOS ABOUT THE MAPLE SYRUP-MAKING PROCESS? HERE'S THE GENERAL PROCESS.

1. Insert taps into sugar maple trees. Sap runs when temperatures dip below freezing at night and rise above freezing during the day.
2. Collect sap. Sap can drip from taps into buckets or run via a series of vacuum tubes that lead to a holding tank.
3. Boil sap. Sap is boiled down in an evaporator. It takes about 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of maple syrup.
4. Filter the syrup.
5. Bottle the syrup.
6. Pour over pancakes and enjoy!

FFA *in the* USA

EACH YEAR, FFA CHAPTERS AROUND THE COUNTRY CELEBRATE NATIONAL FFA WEEK. IT'S A TIME TO SHARE WHAT FFA IS AND THE IMPACT IT HAS ON MEMBERS EVERY DAY. LOOKING FOR WAYS TO MAKE 2020 NATIONAL FFA WEEK (FEB. 22-29) THE BEST? READ ON TO SEE HOW YOUR FELLOW MEMBERS HAVE MADE THE WEEK A SUCCESS. — Compiled by Julie Woodard



Scan this code with your phone's camera to learn more about FFA Week.

ALABAMA

During FFA Week, Spring Garden FFA hosts an annual breakfast for farmers and FFA alumni to show its appreciation for all their contributions.



ALASKA

In a show of unity, FFA members around the state don Official Dress for Wear Blue Wednesday and share pics on social media.

ARIZONA

In a long-standing tradition, Kingman FFA hosts a dance. Chapters from around the state join in on the festivities.

ARKANSAS

Southside FFA partnered with Cedar Ridge FFA, the local fire department and law enforcement to create a Fire Fund for families who have lost their homes to fire. The chapter even hosted a color run to support the message of #bettertogether.

CALIFORNIA

Using #WeareCAFFA, members and alumni posted pictures of their first time wearing Official Dress, along with a current photo.

COLORADO

McClave FFA members refine their interview skills while educating the public through an annual Agriculture Fair. Students create presentations about their SAEs and deliver them to local judges.

CONNECTICUT

Mattabeset FFA holds a hallway decorating contest. Each class is assigned a hallway to decorate for FFA Week and teachers decide the winner.

DELAWARE
Middletown FFA invites members from around the state to its annual dodgeball tournament.

FLORIDA

From campus-wide teacher appreciation celebrations to community service activities, Florida chapters showcase the blue and gold across the state.

GEORGIA

Colquitt County FFA threw an Activities fest where students learned about agriculture and FFA while enjoying engaging activities.

HAWAII

Kalani FFA built a garden facility next to the Kahauiki Village Laundromat. The outdoor classroom included raised beds, hydroponics beds, a mini-nursery and more. The beds will be monitored by Wi-Fi-connected raspberry pi's and arduinos.

IDAHO

Teton FFA throws down with an FFA trivia contest each morning of FFA Week to promote the organization to its school and community.



ILLINOIS

Marion FFA hosts a 5K run/walk to support member involvement and a pancake breakfast to support its local alumni and supporters.

INDIANA

On Monday of FFA Week, members are invited to the Indiana State House to participate in Indiana FFA Page Day. Members work alongside legislators and learn more about the legislative process.

IOWA

Roland-Story FFA packages and provides meals to elderly shut-ins within its community and school district.

KANSAS

Many chapters celebrate with spirit days and participate in events, such as a pancake feed, to give back to their communities.

KENTUCKY

In honor of FFA Week, Kentucky FFA used #FFAjacketstory to share stories of past FFA members who once wore the blue jacket and the impact it had on their lives.

LOUISIANA

The Louisiana School for the Deaf and Visually Impaired is celebrating its first FFA Week with the new D.R.E.A.M Academy, which features career and technical programs along with an FFA chapter.

MAINE

The state officers travel to Ag Day at the statehouse to put FFA on display for all representatives.

MARYLAND

Boonsboro FFA members distribute I Support FFA buttons to faculty and staff, and invite them to join in the week's activities. Those who wear the button receive a prize each day. On Friday, faculty and staff visit the agriculture department after school to turn in their button as admission to a make-your-own ice cream sundae bar.

MASSACHUSETTS

Essex FFA kicked off FFA Week by giving back. Members collected donations for the Ocean Conservancy to clean beaches, protect oceans and invest in research.



MICHIGAN

Uby FFA hangs posters featuring agriculture facts in its school hallways.

MINNESOTA

Fertile-Beltrami FFA puts on an Ag Olympics the Thursday of FFA Week. Members can compete in various competitions ranging from a balloon pop to tractor racing.

MISSISSIPPI

Each year during FFA Week, Mississippi FFA hosts over 600 members, along with legislators and sponsors, for breakfast followed by a flag-raising ceremony on the steps of the Mississippi State Capitol.

MISSOURI

Missouri FFA members celebrate FFA Week with style as they drive their farm tractors to school.

MONTANA

Some chapters put on Ag Olympics, which allow members to interact with both elementary and high school students through engaging games and even an Official Dress race.

NEBRASKA

Boone Central FFA shows FFA pride and support through simple and fun events, such as a Drive Your Tractor to School Day and a petting zoo.

NEVADA

Nevada FFA members tour local food and agriculture companies to connect with community leaders, learn from their operations and spread the mission of FFA to potential stakeholders.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

During FFA Week, you can find chapters at New Hampshire's Farm & Forest Expo advocating for agricultural education and spreading their passion for agriculture and natural resources.

NEW JERSEY

Salem Tech FFA hosts a Jersey Fresh Cook-Off, challenging members to bring in Jersey-grown products and to prepare meals for state officers, local businesses and county agents who volunteer as judges.

NEW MEXICO

State officers shared words of wisdom with fellow members on social media.

NEW YORK

Madison FFA partnered with a local contractor to build two self-serve food pantries, called Community Blessing Boxes. The boxes were placed at two area churches.

NORTH CAROLINA

Wakefield FFA members joined their local Culver's to hand out seed packets to encourage planting a row for the hungry. A mighty 5,000 packets went to customers during the week.

NORTH DAKOTA

Hyping up the farm-to-fork connection, Napoleon FFA celebrates FFA Week with a saucy spaghetti eating contest — no utensils or hands allowed!

OHIO

Twin Valley South-MVCTC puckers up with a Kiss the ? event. Teachers must kiss exotic animals as they collect money for the local children's hospital.

OKLAHOMA

State officers celebrate the week by traveling to different chapters across the state. Several chapters also volunteer at their local food banks.

OREGON

Bend FFA organizes a thank-you breakfast where it makes pancakes for its school staff.

PENNSYLVANIA

State officers host a Meet Your State Officer at Hoss's night, in which members travel to their local Hoss's steakhouse restaurant to have dinner and to socialize.

PUERTO RICO

Members put their creativity to the test with an FFA poster contest. The best are recognized at state convention.

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island holds its annual half-time conference during FFA Week. State officers put on workshops for the state's three chapters.

SOUTH CAROLINA

To wrap up FFA Week, Pendleton FFA hosts a state-wide Mr. FFA Scholarship Competition to showcase the state's unique and talented FFA members.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Members celebrated FFA Week with a photo challenge on social media: SAE Sunday, Memory Monday, Teacher Tuesday, Wear OD Wednesday, Throwback Thursday, Ag Fact Friday and Selfie with Animal Saturday.

TENNESSEE

State officers devote FFA Week to the annual Goodwill Tour, where they tour the state and interact with hundreds of FFA members, stakeholders and other industry leaders. At the end of the week, over 500 members join the state officers in a Legislative Breakfast at the state capitol.

TEXAS

Abernathy FFA partnered with the Hub City Outreach Center to make sidewalk chalk that was donated to the summer program for at-risk youth.

VERMONT

During FFA Week, the state officer team stays busy with TV appearances and radio talk shows to promote FFA and agriculture.

**UTAH**

Royal FFA partners with its alumni and supporters on a fundraiser where participants can win The Pig by buying a ticket for the raffle drawing.

VIRGINIA

State officers visited chapters throughout the state on a Goodwill Tour.

WASHINGTON

Stanwood FFA members fire up the grill and hold a dinner and auction for its sponsors.

WEST VIRGINIA

Spring Valley FFA collaborated with the Facing Hunger Foodbank and educated the entire high school on the food security problems faced by its peers.

WISCONSIN

State officers kick off FFA Week by enjoying a break-fast round table discussion with Brad Pfaff, Wisconsin Secretary-designee of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

WYOMING

Thermopolis FFA dished up fruit and biscuits and gravy for its school staff.





FFA runs deep in Scott Stump's blood. It started in Lagrange County, Ind., where his father, Ned Stump, was the agriculture teacher at Prairie Heights High School for 37 years. Later, Scott Stump was an agriculture teacher himself. Then he moved on to work for the National FFA Organization. Today, he's the assistant secretary for career, technical, and adult education at the U.S. Department of Education, serving as a principal advisor to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. We recently asked him about his background in FFA and how it serves him yet today.

On the RECORD

“ SAY ‘YES’ TO ALL OPPORTUNITIES THAT AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND FFA OFFER. ”

Scott STUMP

Q: WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT YOUR FFA EXPERIENCE?

A: My supervised agricultural experience (SAE) was ownership of a small flock of breeding ewes. For placement experience, I milked cows for neighbors and worked at a local equipment dealership. FFA drove our family calendar like the seasons.

It led me to Purdue University and serving with the 1986-87 Indiana FFA state officer team. I found that building people and building systems that build people is my purpose in life.

I began my professional career as the agriscience teacher at Manchester High School in North Manchester, Ind. We expanded enrollment in the program from 30 to 137 students.

Q: WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT YOUR CURRENT JOB AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION?

A: I was sworn in on July 30, 2018, and on my second day on the job, President Trump signed the Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act. It invests \$1.3 billion in career and technical education. The best part of my job is helping states leverage the flexibilities in this new law.

There is a current skills gap in this nation that can be fixed by engaging students earlier in career-based pathways like those offered in agricultural education and FFA.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE FOR MEMBERS CONTEMPLATING A CAREER IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE?

A: Say “yes” to all opportunities that agricultural education and FFA offer. When your agriculture instructor says, “You should consider the extemporaneous speaking contest,” say, “Yes, I will give that a try.” Or, “You are ready to expand your SAE to true entrepreneurship,” say, “I will give it a shot!” In each case, you’re advancing toward a better future.

The experiences I had in the blue and gold jacket (it’s still in my office at the Department of Education!) prepared me to make a positive difference in the role in which I serve today.

— By Gene Johnston



Ag Angle

NICOLE MORRIS

LOCATION: Modesto, Calif.

FFA CHAPTER: Advisor at Central Catholic FFA

INSTAGRAM: @themilkdiva

Growing up on the farm means daily chores and work. We want to continue the traditions that the three generations on our farm before us started, so it's early mornings for our kids and their friends!

✱ **SHARE YOUR AG ANGLE WITH US!** It's as simple as completing the submission form at FFA.org/Submit-Your-Story. The editors will review all entries and publish one in each issue of *FFA New Horizons*. All material submitted becomes the property of the National FFA Organization. If your idea is used, you give FFA the right to use it in any manner.

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