NEW HORIZONS

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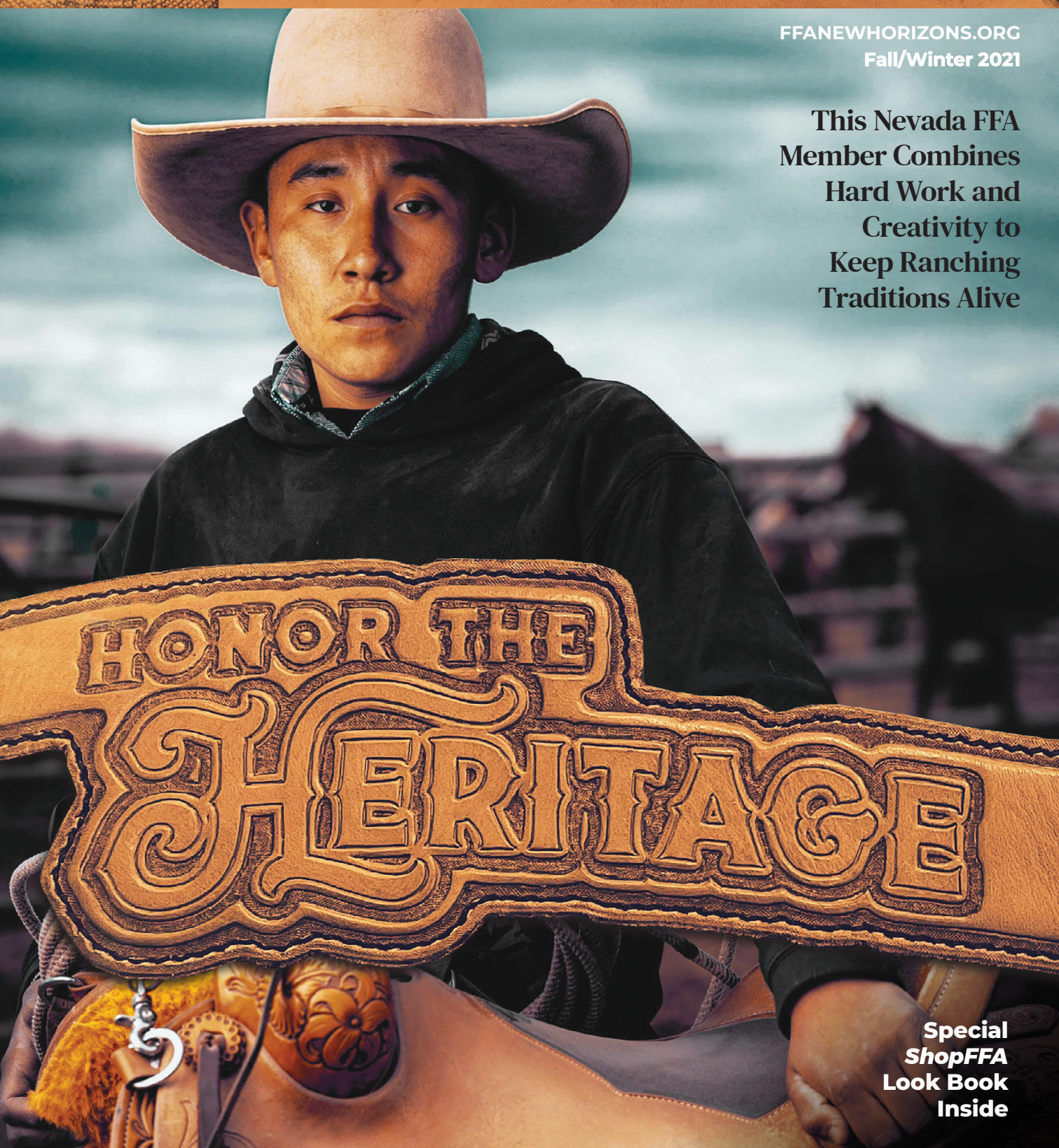
Fall/Winter 2021

This Nevada FFA Member Combines Hard Work and Creativity to Keep Ranching Traditions Alive



Special *ShopFFA* Look Book Inside

KEEPING AG TRADITIONS Alive

Don't you just love hearing the personal stories of FFA members across the country? Big, small, seemingly inconsequential or life-altering, they are all inspiring — and unique.

Monte Cummins has been lending a helping hand on the Walker-Carpenter Ranch, which sits on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Owyhee, Nev., since he was 8 years old — too small to move a hay bale or drive a four-wheeler but old enough to learn the ropes in farming and ranching.

"From then on, Monte would come and help no matter what we were doing," says Ryan Carpenter, who co-owns the ranch and serves as the FFA advisor at Owyhee High School. "If it was snowing or raining, if we were branding or feeding cows, Monte was there."

Today, Cummins, who served as the 2020-21 Duck Valley FFA chapter president, runs his own 20-head herd of Black Angus-cross commercial cows across the wide-open plains in Nevada and Idaho.

But work on the Walker-Carpenter Ranch also allowed Cummins to pursue another passion: leatherworking.

Cummins first learned the traditional craft from his dad. Then, in a shop on the ranch, Carpenter, a professional saddlemaker, encouraged Cummins to tackle larger projects. He now makes headstalls for the horses, cutting the leather, gluing pieces together, shaping and stamping each one until perfect.

"A couple of times, I didn't expect it to look as good as it did, and it just kind of motivates me to do a better job every time," Cummins says. "I get to use my creativity, and it's something I really enjoy doing." You can read more about Cummins' craft — and his dedication to keeping ranching traditions alive — in "Honor the Heritage" on page 24.

In this issue, you'll also find articles about national convention, tips for starting a new FFA chapter, how to recruit new FFA members, the state of broadband internet in America and more.

Enjoy, and have a great fall!

Justin Davey

Justin Davey
Editor, *FFA New Horizons*
ffanewhorizons@meredith.com

P.S. I also want to introduce you to **Kasey Riebel,** the incoming editor of *FFA New Horizons*. While she's newer to the FFA New Horizons team, she's not new to FFA. She's a former chapter president from Nebraska (her supervised agricultural experience was vegetable gardening and helping on her family's corn and soybean farm). She holds a degree in ag communications and journalism from Texas A&M University. You'll hear from her in future editions of the magazine.

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FFA COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER Julie Woodard
EDITOR Justin Davey
CONTENT MANAGER Kasey Riebel
CREATIVE DIRECTOR Matt Strelecki
COPY EDITORS Paula Barbour, Nancy Dietz
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Sharon Lee Miller, Washington, D.C.
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THE FFA VISION
FFA is growing 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.

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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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Monte Cummins, right, from the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, learns the arts of leather carving and raising cattle from his FFA advisor, Ryan Carpenter. P. 24

THE FEED

Scan With Your Phone

5 Things FROM FFA.ORG

From national convention info to individual scholarships, these are your go-to resources for this season.

94th National FFA Convention & Expo

Keep up to date on all the latest national convention details and make your plans to travel or tune in to experience all the event has to offer. Connect with fellow members near and far, pop into the Virtual FFA Blue Room for an immersive agricultural experience and explore the expo on Oct. 27-30. ***Convention.FFA.org***

FFA Scholarships

There's an FFA scholarship available to reach an array of post-secondary plans and career goals. Thanks to the support of generous individuals and businesses through the National FFA Foundation, high school seniors and collegiate members as well as nonmembers are eligible to apply for scholarships. The FFA scholarship application opens on Nov. 1. ***FFA.org/Scholarships***

Official FFA Manual

The Official FFA Manual contains all you need to know about FFA – including its history, bylaws, constitution and more – and is accessible on desktop or mobile devices. An updated version of the manual will be available for the new school year. ***FFA.org/Official-Manual***

Service Project Maps

Need new ideas for a chapter service project? Use the National Days of Service and the Living to Serve Grants maps to inspire your next project. Check out what other chapters are doing in your area and across the country. ***FFA.org/LivingToServe***

FFA.org News

The national convention and expo moves quickly; you won't want to miss out on the latest happenings as they occur. Online articles, slideshows and videos will help you stay informed of all that's taking place in Indianapolis. ***FFA.org/News***

More Than a Jacket

Learn more about the famous blue corduroy FFA jacket that's been worn and loved by members for nearly 90 years. – By Jessica Walker Boehm

Photography: Dan Videtich

In honor of National Corduroy Day on Nov. 11, read on for a selection of favorite facts about the iconic blue corduroy jacket. A few will probably surprise you.

- The blue jacket's origin dates to 1933 when FFA advisor Gus Linter saw a blue corduroy jacket in the window of a hardware store in Fredericktown, Ohio. He connected with the jacket supplier, Universal Uniform Company, and had his chapter's name stitched on the back of the jackets with gold thread.

- At the 1933 National FFA Convention in Kansas City, the members of Linter's chapter – Fredericktown FFA – debuted their blue jackets. They were so popular, the convention's official delegates made them part of the official FFA attire.

- The millionth FFA jacket was sold in 1964, and by 1976, 2 million jackets had been sold. Today, more than 80,000 jackets are sold annually.

- It requires 1.6 yards of corduroy to create one FFA jacket. Over the course of a year, that's approximately 128,000 yards of corduroy devoted to FFA jackets.

- Over time, the jackets have evolved to offer a better fit and feature zippers rather than snaps, and the pockets are now rounded instead of squared.

- FFA members can earn pins for their jackets, but there should never be more than three pins on the front. The three medals worn should represent the highest degree earned, the highest office held, and the highest award earned by the member. If members have a State or American degree, they may place that pin above their name, with the other two pins displayed below the name.

Thanks to the Give the Gift of Blue program, funded by individual donors, foundations and corporate sponsors, the National FFA Organization gives jackets to members who wouldn't otherwise be able to own one. Since 2014, National FFA has gifted more than 12,000 jackets. Learn more at **FFA.org/GiveBlue.**

Browse the ShopFFA Look Book in this issue or **ShopFFA.org** for your very own FFA jacket.

Scan the code to see how the iconic FFA jacket is made.

Lifesaving Labrador

– By Jodi Helmer

In 2020, members of the North Clay FFA Chapter in Louisville, Ill., started fundraising to purchase a seizure-response dog for one of their members, Macy Worthey, who has experienced uncontrolled seizures since the fifth grade. Their "fun run" raised the $20,000 the Worthey family needed to purchase a trained seizure-response dog from SIT Service Dogs in Ava, Ill.

It can take up to two years to train a service dog for duty. Worthey, a sophomore at North Clay High School, met the latest litter of Labrador retriever puppies and fell head over paws for the adorable dogs; she hopes to be matched with a dog before graduation.

"They were the sweetest things ever," she says.

While Worthey waits for the right dog to be trained, the North Clay FFA Chapter has "adopted" SIT Service Dogs as a favorite FFA chapter project. The members hosted a donation drive for National FFA Week, collecting treats, towels and leashes for the service dogs in training; community members contributed cash donations to support the cause.

While Worthey waits for the right dog to be trained, the North Clay FFA Chapter has "adopted" SIT Service Dogs as a favorite FFA chapter project.

"The owners of SIT Service Dogs were so surprised that a group of students and their idea generated so many donations for them," says Katrina Van Dyke, agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor.

Worthey plans to volunteer with the organization this summer. She'll take the dogs in training on excursions to parks and retail shops to help them get used to different sights, sounds and smells.

"It's so hard to wait," she admits. "It feels really good to be able to help until I'm matched [with a dog]."

Ag News for Your Inbox

Former FFA member creates an email newsletter for agriculture.

– By Lauren Denton

In an era with an email newsletter for everything, Travis Martin, the 2009-10 Indiana FFA state president, found one industry missing – agriculture.

While reviewing emails as a freelance marketer for tech startups, he thought, "Maybe I can be that curator for my niche."

Enter his side hustle, Magnetic Ag, which launched in November 2020 "for the busy farmer, agribiz professional, college student, policy guru, ag teacher and others that call ag their 'thing,'" according to the welcome email.

At inception, the five-minute news fix deployed twice a week with a snapshot of ag headlines, commodity market moves, policy updates, tech insights and more. Quirky and conversational, it's "concise, digestible and enjoyable to read," Martin says. The primary goal is to build advocacy and awareness for what's happening across the entire industry, not just one's own discipline.

"That interconnectedness is more tangible in ag than other places," he says.

Martin wants to build an entire community out of that connection. Future plans include online reader forums and live events at colleges and ag company offices. Daily frequency of the newsletter and content catered to specific verticals (i.e., row crops and livestock) are also in the works.

The growth of Magnetic Ag – and the small team of writers behind it – can be attributed entirely to word of mouth; Martin has used no paid promotions. "Everyone just passes it on to someone else who they think will enjoy it," he says.

Read All About It

Hover your smartphone camera over this code to read Magnetic Ag and subscribe.

Photography: Courtesy Macy Worthey, Travis Martin

Why We Teach Ag

Learn why these National Teacher Ambassadors for FFA are so passionate about their role in raising the next generation of agriculturists. – By Jessica Walker Boehm

Have you ever wondered what inspired your favorite agricultural education teachers to choose their profession? In celebration of National Teach Ag Day, observed in September, three Teacher Ambassadors for FFA share what led them to the classroom and what keeps them coming back.

Kenneth Barbosa

Julio Victor Guzman Middle FFA in San Germán, P.R.

Kenneth Barbosa's passion for ag education stems from a love of agriculture and the outdoors – both of which began at a young age.

Although Barbosa didn't have the opportunity to enroll in ag classes or join an FFA chapter, he loved farming with his family and attending agricultural fairs. His appreciation for agriculture turned into a career as an agriculture instructor, a role he's held for 11 years.

"As an agriculture teacher and an FFA advisor, I teach young people the importance of agriculture along with how to become a strong leader and a better person overall, and I couldn't be happier to have this job," Barbosa says. "Choosing this career path is the best decision I've ever made."

Tamra Herschbach

Churchill County FFA in Fallon, Nev.

Tamra Herschbach's journey to ag education has come full circle.

Herschbach was a member of Churchill County FFA as a student at Churchill County High School, which is where she currently teaches. During her earlier years at the school, she realized she wanted to work in ag education.

"I knew from my sophomore year of high school that I wanted to be an ag teacher and an FFA advisor," says Herschbach, a 14-year ag instructor who previously served as the Churchill County FFA historian and vice president. "I feel passionate about helping young people understand where their food comes from, and I love sharing FFA leadership opportunities with my students. No matter where they go or what they pursue, they can take these skills with them."

Hailey Gates

Hendersonville FFA in Hendersonville, Tenn.

Hailey Gates, one of five advisors for Hendersonville FFA, always wanted to be a teacher, but it wasn't until she found FFA that she knew the area in which she would specialize.

Completing her third year as an ag educator this year, Gates is proud to teach her students how agriculture impacts their lives while also passing on life lessons she learned from her former advisors.

"My FFA advisors are still my mentors today," Gates says. "Not only did they teach me about agriculture, but they also shared the importance of kindness and the willingness to show up and work hard. I've never forgotten that. Every day, I do my best to impart this wisdom to my students."

To learn more about National Teach Ag Day and the many ways you can celebrate, visit **NAAE.org/TeachAg.**

Photography: Courtesy Kenneth Barbosa, Tamra Herschbach and Hailey Gates; Getty Images, hudiemm

5 Tips for Recruiting New Members

For most schools, the new academic year kicks off in the fall, and a fresh class of students and newcomers will look for ways to get involved. Recruit new members to join your chapter this year in creative ways. – By Bev Flatt

1. Host a "Bring a Friend" meeting.
Encourage current members to bring someone new to a chapter activity. No one wants to attend something and feel like they don't know a single person in the room. Plan something fun and welcoming and watch the sign-up roster fill up quickly.

2. Use school platforms.
Does your school make morning announcements? Does your library or gymnasium open before school? Put your chapter's name in the places where students already are – make up a jingle for the announcements, create FFA bookmarks or branded sports equipment and get your name out there!

3. Master outdoor advertising.
Invite current members to decorate their vehicles, parking spaces or even the school sidewalk to encourage students to check out your organization. See how far your school spirit can take you.

4. Provide a meal or snack.
Food is a natural draw for most future FFA members. Host a chili cookoff and invite future members to be the judge. Or join forces with the dairy foods evaluation team and plan a crazy grilled cheese bar or pizza-making challenge as a recruitment activity.

5. Create a TikTok Challenge.
Whether you are devising instructions for a secret handshake or starting a 10-finger countdown challenge, engaging with potential members online can be a great place to start recruiting early.

Quiz: Waste Not, Want Not

How much do you know about food waste in America?

– By Jessica Mozo

Food is the most important output of our agricultural system. Unfortunately, a staggering amount of the food produced in the United States goes uneaten, ending up in landfills instead of nourishing human bodies. Take this quiz to test your knowledge of food waste in the United States.

1. **What percentage of the U.S. food supply goes to waste?**
   A. 10% to 20%
   B. 30% to 40%
   C. 50% to 60%

2. **In the year 2017, how much food waste was generated by American households?**
   A. 17 million tons
   B. 22 million tons
   C. 41 million tons

3. **What category of product gets thrown out most frequently?**
   A. Dairy
   B. Fruit
   C. Vegetables

4. **How much food does the average American family of four waste per year, in terms of cost?**
   A. $700
   B. $1,000
   C. $1,500

5. **Misreading labels is one of the biggest reasons people throw food away. What percentage of Americans throw away perfectly good food because they misunderstand expiration labels such as "sell by" and "use by"?**
   A. 30%
   B. 50%
   C. 80%

6. **What are some ways you can reduce food waste at home?**
   A. Utilizing leftovers
   B. Composting food scraps
   C. Both of the above

Answers: 1. B; 2. C; 3. A; 4. C; 5. C; 6. C

Photography: Getty Images, EyeEm

Top 4 Convention To-Dos

On-site or on the computer, these highlights are for everyone. – By Lauren Denton

One key takeaway from last year's 93rd National FFA Convention & Expo: Virtual is here to stay. "More students than ever got a taste of what it's like to be at convention," says Mandy Hazlett, associate director of convention and events at the National FFA Organization. "We discovered we can easily connect with members even if they aren't present."

Moving forward, the in-person convention experience in Indianapolis will coincide with a virtual program for those at home.

Here are four things not to miss, no matter how you attend.

1. Connect with other members.

"This is a unique opportunity to learn from members across the country," Hazlett says. "Challenge yourself to sit with people from other states and really take the time to get to know them."

2. Take in the Expo.

With more than 100 vendors in one space, it's a prime time to connect with industry representatives when you attend in-person. "You may discover a career that interests you that you've never heard of," Hazlett says.

3. Attend at least two sessions.

The opening session, sponsored by Merck Animal Health, sets the tone for the week. Plan to make that one and another that interests you. If you're at home, make sure to tune in to RFD-TV for gavel-to-gavel coverage of the convention, or you can watch the streaming sessions on **Convention.FFA.org.**

4. Participate in National Days of Service.

FFA members can register to participate in person during convention or host a service event in their local communities during the month of October. Share how you were "Living to Serve" by reporting a local service event at **FFA.org/National-Days-Of-Service** and inspire others to take action.

Visit **Convention.FFA.org** for more information.

7 Things To Look Forward To This Semester

Many exciting things await throughout the next four months. Leadership trainings, conferences, competitions and more are filling up members' calendars. See what activities you can engage in throughout the next semester. – By Bev Flatt

1 Focus on your supervised agricultural experience (SAE).

Starting a new school year, you'll want to prioritize the things that are important to you. For some, that might mean working hard on an SAE or even beginning a new one. Need SAE inspiration? Visit **FFA.org/FFA-Video-Center/SAE-Video-Library.**

2 Prep for competition and award season.

Spend your free time polishing and preparing for the competitions ahead. Most award and degree applications are due in the spring or early summer, so prepare now.

3 Engage in community service.

Do you need hours for your degree or scholarship applications? What are the greatest needs in your community? Answer these questions and make plans to give back to your community.

4 Plan chapter programming.

Your chapter officer team was probably just elected. Take time to bond and create new activities for the chapter during a chapter officer retreat.

5 Participate in county and state fairs.

County and state fairs are a rite of passage for members. Volunteer on the fair board, plan how to advocate for the industry with fair attendees and prepare to show animals at fair time.

6 Visit college campuses and complete job shadows.

It's never too early to begin making plans for after high school. Learn how to prepare for college applications, take career preparation courses and find workplaces that will allow you to experience a day in the life of an employee.

7 Make a plan for the year ahead.

Visit with your mentors during the semester to develop a personal SAE plan, plot an FFA leadership plan, and look at your school course planning. Make decisions with your future goals in mind.

Photography: Getty Images, Issarawat Tattong, EyeEm

NATIONAL FFA OFFICER

Question & Answer

The National FFA Convention & Expo brings memories that last a lifetime. What is a top national convention memory that sticks with you today?

Doster Harper

NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT

My senior year, our chapter traveled to convention in a bus, which ended up breaking down in the middle of Indianapolis, 1 mile from our hotel. We freaked out for a second but ended up making the most of it. The hour that our bus was stuck right next to Lucas Oil Stadium went by quickly because we laughed, played music and had a good time with the excitement of finally being in downtown Indy.

Anna Mathis

NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY

Being on stage when the 2016-17 National FFA Officers were elected was a moment that will always stick with me. These officers were crying, jumping and laughing. At the time, I didnt understand; I was just amazed to be in their presence. I realize now what a special moment that was for the people who care so deeply about agriculture, agricultural education and FFA. That passion is what keeps the flame of our organization alive.

Artha Jonassaint

SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I will never, ever forget hearing Clay Sapp's retiring address at the 86th National FFA Convention & Expo. As he took us into "his little world" and asked us what we were doing for others, I was stopped in my little 13-year-old tracks. Because of the words I heard on that day in November of 2013, I was inspired to find ways to enter other people's little worlds through service every day that followed.

Paxton Dahmer

EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

One of my all-time favorite memories from National FFA Convention is competing in the livestock evaluation career development event. This was my final livestock contest of my high school career, and I'll never be able to top the feeling of competing with my team for the final time. To this day, my teammates are some of my best friends. I wouldn't trade that memory for the world!

Miriam Hoffman

CENTRAL REGION VICE PRESIDENT

Sitting in the nosebleeds at my first National FFA Convention in 2014, I felt deep in my soul that FFA was for me. It was during the retiring address from the central vice president that year, Steven Brockshus; his genuine message of love and forgiveness made me realize that if people like Steven led FFA, then it was a place I wanted to be. It was that convention that ultimately led me to national office.

David Lopez

WESTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I had the privilege of representing the Latinx community at the 92nd National Convention & Expo, reciting opening and closing ceremonies in Spanish. I can wholeheartedly say it has been one of my fondest memories at national convention. In this moment, the organization celebrated culture and recognized the gap between students across the country from different backgrounds. National convention is an opportunity for us to continue learning about the gap and how we can celebrate all cultures.

Photography: Copyright © FFA

AG 101

Broadband in Rural America

Agriculture is undergoing a digital transformation, but the promise of new technologies is only as good as the connectivity available in the rural areas they intend to serve. Many of these technologies promise to boost farmers' profits, increase operational efficiency and optimize the use of farm inputs, such as fertilizer. The rural communities in which farmers live, work and play also suffer because of a lack of high-speed internet access. Limited connectivity creates challenges for rural residents around schooling, work and access to digital services such as online banking or telehealth. Read on to learn more about the state of rural broadband access in America. • By Lauren Manning • Photo-illustration by William Duke

Millions Report Poor Access

Over 1.3 million Americans have extremely poor access to broadband, while an additional 1.2 million have partial access. People in these categories commonly live in rural areas with low population densities. Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, California and Arizona report some of the highest numbers of school-age residents without access to broadband.

Why the Rural Disconnect?

Roughly two-thirds of rural Americans (63%) say they have a broadband internet connection at home, up from about a third (35%) in 2007, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in early 2019. The high cost of installing thousands of miles of underground fiber-optic cable combined with the limited number of subscribers in areas with low population density deter broadband companies from investing in rural internet infrastructure.

Shifting Preferences Reveal Need

Lifestyle changes prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic have caused many urban dwellers to consider moving to rural communities to take advantage of less population, lower costs of living and an overall improved quality of life. Although this population influx can help reinvigorate rural areas that have been in decline, without proper infrastructure to support growth, residents will encounter challenges.

The Impact on Farming, Working and Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the limitations and hurdles that a lack of broadband access poses to education. As students were asked to stay home and continue their schooling through online platforms, households without internet access or with poor connectivity struggled to keep up with coursework.

Residents without internet or with poor connectivity in rural communities also encountered challenges while working from home during the pandemic. Many were forced to drive to locations with more reliable internet to participate in videoconferences and remain connected with their colleagues

As the average age of the American farmer increases, there is a growing call to encourage younger generations to consider careers in agriculture. Without broadband access, however, young families may be discouraged from moving to rural communities and opt to stay close to large urban centers instead.

The Work Continues

The American Connection Project Broadband Coalition is made up of more than 100 businesses collaborating to work on rural connectivity solutions. Members include the National FFA Organization, Microsoft, Tractor Supply Company, BASF, Topcon, Toro, AEM, Bayer Crop Science, Cargill, Corteva Agriscience, Land O'Lakes, Syngenta and Zoetis.

President Biden's plan for infrastructure projects would allocate $100 million over the next eight years for rural broadband. The goal is to provide 100% broadband coverage to rural Americans. The federal proposal also aims to reduce the cost of broadband for qualifying low-income households to improve accessibility.

A new campaign called UnmuteTheWorld hopes to raise awareness around the challenges that a lack of broadband access poses, including limiting access to employment opportunities, education and health care. It held a global virtual meeting day on April 9 – the 91st anniversary of the first two-video call – to shed light on the digital divide that affects people around the world. •

Photography: YUBO, Ron Thomas, Thomas Janisch, Xuanyu Han, Teresa Kopec, Bim, Webin of Getty Images

CURIOSITY AMID CHEMOTHERAPY

STILLWATER FFA MEMBER TURNS CANCER TREATMENT INTO AN AWARD-WINNING AGRISCIENCE FAIR PROJECT. – By Jodi Helmer

Austin Hooten knew oil and gas was the biggest industry in Oklahoma, but he had no idea it would play an important role in his life.

Hooten, 18, a senior at Stillwater High School in Stillwater, Okla., was diagnosed with lymphoma in the sixth grade. During an appointment with his oncologist, he learned the port used to deliver his chemotherapy medications was made of plastic and rubber, both oil and gas by-products.

"Indirectly, oil and gas by-products saved my life," he says.

Hooten suspected that others would be just as surprised to learn about all the products made from oil and gas by-products; it inspired his agriscience fair project. The Stillwater FFA Chapter president won several awards, including a first-place win in the power, structural and technical systems category at the Oklahoma FFA Agriscience Fair contest and first place at the National FFA Convention & Expo.

"It was a huge accomplishment for me and really cool to know that all of the hard work really paid off," he says.

The wins – and positive feedback from his agriscience teachers, Robbie Branscum, Tanner Nipper and Bailey Kliewer – inspired Hooten to continue pursuing his interests.

Hooten used the research from his agriscience fair project for his supervised agricultural experience (SAE) and as the basis for exploring precision agriculture.

With the help of a grant from the Stillwater Public Education Foundation and the Oklahoma FFA Foundation, he acquired a "farm bot," a hydroponics cart and an aquaponics system. As part of his research, he measured the energy efficiency of these up-and-coming agricultural technologies. He competed at the National FFA Convention and placed as a top four finalist for the Agricultural Proficiency Award in agriscience research – integrated systems.

"It was very cool to see that side of the national FFA convention," Hooten says. "I was so proud to showcase all of the research I'd done over the last few years."

For Hooten, who has been in remission since 2015 and plans to major in animal science and agribusiness at Oklahoma State University this fall, the experiences were also healing.

"Looking back, I was fresh off of medicines and surgeries; my hair had just started to grow back, and it was hard to be constantly on the go, going to practices and doing research. I did get very tired at times," he admits. "It helped heal me just as much as chemotherapy and surgery because it helped boost my morale and spirit and taught me to live life to the fullest and never take an opportunity for granted."

Learn more about participating in the agriscience fair at **FFA.org/Agriscience-Fair.**

> "It was a huge accomplishment for me and really cool to know that all of the hard work really paid off."
> - Austin Hooten

Opposite, clockwise from top left: Austin Hooten showcased his research at the Oklahoma FFA Agriscience Fair; Hooten and his sister, Hailea, exit the show ring; Hooten won third place in agriscience research - integrated systems at the Oklahoma State FFA Convention; Hooten received chemotherapy treatments.

For Hooten, who has been in remission since 2015 and plans to major in animal science and agribusiness at Oklahoma State University this fall, the experiences were also healing.

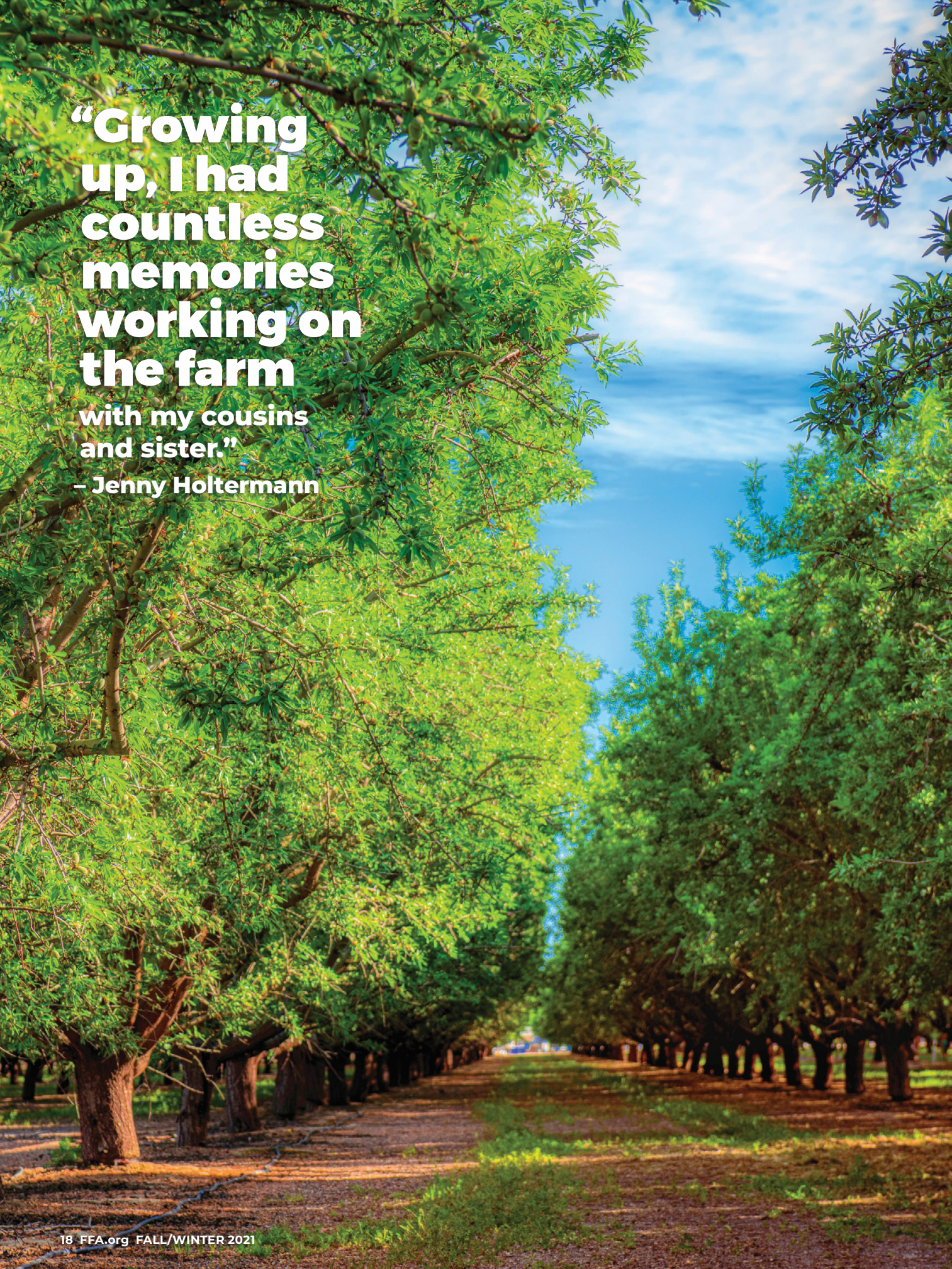
Photography: Courtesy Austin Hooten

What's Up With Almond Girl Jenny?

As a female farmer, Jenny Holtermann has found success in leadership roles advocating for the industry and raising the next generation of agriculturists.

By Bev Flatt • Photography by Jeff Noble

Almonds growing on Holtermann's California farm


“Growing up, I had countless memories working on the farm with my cousins and sister.”
– Jenny Holtermann

More than 100 years ago, a young man made his way to the Central Valley of California, determined to put down roots. His dream of owning his own farm lives on for the Holtermann family.

"My husband and I are both fourth-generation farmers," says Jenny Holtermann. "Both of our great-grandfathers started their farms in the early 1900s, and now the fifth generation is active on the farm today – our son and daughter as well as our niece and nephew."

Nearly a century after the family's first plants made their way into the ground, Holtermann shares her story of living and working on the family almond farm through her online presence, Almond Girl Jenny, an advocacy stage that was built out of a lifetime of agricultural experiences and a love for the National FFA Organization.

Top: The Holtermanns (from left to right: Hazel, Jenny, Henry and Tim) enjoy a ride through the almond orchard.
Inset: Jenny Holtermann holds a bag of almonds from the family farm.

Leadership Through FFA

"Growing up, I had countless memories working on the farm with my cousins and sister," Holtermann says. "During summer months and school breaks, I was usually found helping out on the farm with whatever needed to be done: checking irrigation pipes, painting walnut trees to prevent sunburn, managing pests and rodents, and taking care of odds and ends around the family farm."

Holtermann took her love of living and working on the farm with her into high school and joined the Chico FFA Chapter in Northern California. While she loved working in the orchards, she pursued a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) in raising sheep and hogs. She held various FFA leadership positions and competed in events such as parliamentary procedure, job interview and floriculture. However, her favorite FFA memory came after a short break from wearing her blue corduroy jacket.

"Having the chance to go to Indianapolis and receive my American FFA Degree was the icing on the cake for my FFA career," Holtermann says. "I had recently moved away from the farm to pursue an agriculture business degree from Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, Calif. So, taking that trip with my parents, who I didn't see all the time anymore, was a great experience. All that hard work had paid off and it was very humbling."

After bringing home her gold key, Holtermann returned to college and put her FFA knowledge to the test by working at a florist shop and on the university farm to help pay for college. It was there she met her future husband and began to make plans for life after graduation. She made the difficult decision not to move home upon gradua-

Learn More About Almond Girl Jenny.
Scan this code with your smartphone's camera to visit Jenny's website.

Earn Your American FFA Degree

Holtermann's favorite FFA memory was receiving the American FFA Degree. Do you have what it takes? To learn more about how to earn your American FFA Degree, check out FFA.org/American-FFA-Degree.

Above: In addition to growing almonds, the Holtermanns raise chickens for farm-fresh eggs. Below: Checking trees in an almond grove is a family affair. Opposite: Holtermann shows off her American FFA Degree.

tion and instead followed her heart to California's Kern County to start a new farm life with her husband. Today, Holtermann works full-time off the farm, manages the farm books and finances, and raises two young children.

Leadership After FFA

Her FFA leadership positions were just the beginning; she now serves on several agriculture boards.

"I became involved in different leadership positions through the Farm Bureau after college," Holtermann says. "I've been the chair for the California Young Farmers and Ranchers and currently sit on the California Farm Bureau Board of Directors. I also serve on the Global Communications Committee for the Almond Board of California as well as participate locally on the Agriculture Advocacy Committee for Bakersfield College."

Holtermann was also recently selected to represent California in the Partners in Advocacy Leadership program through the American Farm Bureau Federation, a two-year executive-level leadership class.

Advocacy has always been a big part of Holtermann's life, and that passion turned into her thriving blog and online storytelling platforms.

"About seven years ago, I started the blog Almond Girl," she says. "So much information is available on the internet and you can find whatever you want, but it's not always accurate, especially for farming. I started the blog to highlight and share what life on the farm looks like and who a farmer really is. As we had children and our leadership roles progressed, the blog morphed to reflect how my life was changing. I began to talk about raising children on the farm, how the weather affects us and how regulations affect us. It's a way for me to share what a farmer looks like, what our farm looks like and testify that family farms are still alive."

More recently, the Almond Girl blog has become much more than a simple way to reach the masses. It has become an essential part of the farm's marketing strategy.

"Last year was the tipping point for us and is why we started our direct marketing efforts," Holtermann says. "The price of almonds went from $4 a pound to $1.50 per pound to the farmer. You can't quickly diversify when you grow almonds. The trees are there for 20 to 25 years. The infrastructure and equipment are really specialized. In 2020, we started selling our almonds direct and it worked out well because of COVID-19 supply chain challenges. Consumers were looking for a tie to their food. The grocery store shelves were empty. The supply chain was inconsistent. The average American wanted to know where their food was coming from and wanted a connection to that. We were able to help fill that need."

"Making My Own Success"

Although marketing, sales and blogging are a passion for Holtermann, a career and life six hours from her childhood home wasn't always the plan. Being open to new opportunities is the greatest piece of advice she feels she can offer to anyone.

"I had my mind set on what I was going to do after high school and after college. And it's not what I'm doing now. That's OK!" she says. "It's OK to let life lead you down alternative paths. I thought I was going to go home and farm with my father after college, and it took me a while to realize that wasn't what I was going to do after I met my husband. I am making my own strides and I'm making my own success. I started my own business and my own path into leadership positions in a part of the state that was completely foreign to me. That wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been open to opportunities. It's OK to follow your heart because it might lead to bigger and greater success."

Today, the Holtermann family takes nightly strolls in the summer to check irrigation, and Holtermann uses her weekend time to tend to anything that needs to be done around the farm. Instead of sheep and hogs, she now raises chickens, and her free time is spent chasing down an active farm boy and sassy little farm girl.

But in the quiet moments between all the work, she still finds time to grab her camera or write down her experiences to share with the world, thanking her blue and gold past for preparing her for life as the Almond Girl. •

CRAFT THE PERFECT DIGITAL RESUME

MAKE YOUR RESUME STAND OUT IN THE MODERN JOB MARKET.

– By Jessica Mozo

As communications become increasingly digital, resume writing trends continue to change. Gone are the days when job seekers printed their resumes and snail-mailed them to employers. Today, most resumes are submitted digitally, whether they're uploaded, emailed or posted to career websites.

Grabbing the attention of a future employer might mean presenting work samples in an online portfolio or creating a highlight video showcasing your previous work – depending on what type of career you're pursuing. For most career fields, Bonnie Johnson, marketing and communications manager for AgCareers.com, says a digital-first format has become the norm in resume writing.

"The initial interaction with an employer will typically be digital, so optimizing your resume for online should take priority," Johnson says. "Print resumes were more designed, but those graphic elements don't transfer well digitally. We see more simple, clean formats in online resumes."

Customizing resumes for each job application is vital, and it's quick and easy to do digitally.

"Incorporate keywords from the job description into the resume text to help your resume make it through the applicant tracking system and catch the employer's attention," Johnson says.

When creating your resume, include accomplishments from volunteer or extracurricular activities in addition to work or internship experience. This is a great way to expand a resume without an extensive work history.

One caveat: Be brief and to the point. Experts say your resume has only between five and 10 seconds to grab a hiring manager's attention. Include the most important information in the top third of your resume because that's the part most likely to be read. Companies are often overwhelmed with a high volume of resumes, and most submissions get only a quick glance, not a thorough read-through.

Despite digital shifts in resume trends, the cover letter is here to stay.

"I feel strongly that cover letters are the best way to get employers to read your resume," Johnson says. "Cover letters are a chance for you to explain why you're a good fit for the company and role, emphasize skills that may not be easily identifiable or visible on your resume, and expand on correlating experiences that didn't fit in your resume's limited space. If you don't take the time to submit a cover letter, it feels like you're not really interested or invested in the process."

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Use this code with your smartphone to start building your best resume.

Photography: Getty Images, Klaus Vedfelt

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FOLLOWING HER INSTINCTS

From the livestock barn to Tractor Supply Company, FFA has helped this alumna achieve her goals. – By Lauren Denton

When Skyla Colston knows what she wants, she goes for it. Take her FFA start: After growing up following two older sisters to their FFA livestock shows, the North Texas native always knew she wanted to get involved, and in middle school, she did.

"I've shown everything but chickens and rabbits," says Colston, who exchanged athletics in high school for FFA. She says she "did a little bit of everything in FFA," including multiple career and leadership development events, on her way to becoming the 2011-12 FFA chapter president at Northwest High School. She also served as a Texas FFA Area V officer.

Through FFA competitions, she discovered Tarleton State University. "It was the only school I applied to," she says. "I knew from the start that's where I wanted to go." Thanks to an FFA scholarship from San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo, she did so. She initially enrolled as an agricultural education major, influenced by the advisors who were mentors to her, but concluded that wasn't the right fit. Instead, the first-generation college student graduated in 2016 with a degree in agricultural services and development with a concentration in ag communication.

Colston admits she didn't know what she wanted to do as a career until she and her husband moved to Nashville six months later. "I knew Tractor Supply Company (TSC) was headquartered here, and that became my goal company," she says. Colston joined TSC as a customer relationship management coordinator in December 2017.

After a year, she joined the new store team, which works alongside 4-H and FFA. "That was a no-brainer," she says. First serving as coordinator then stepping up to specialist, she was promoted in the spring to her current role as associate manager of new store marketing.

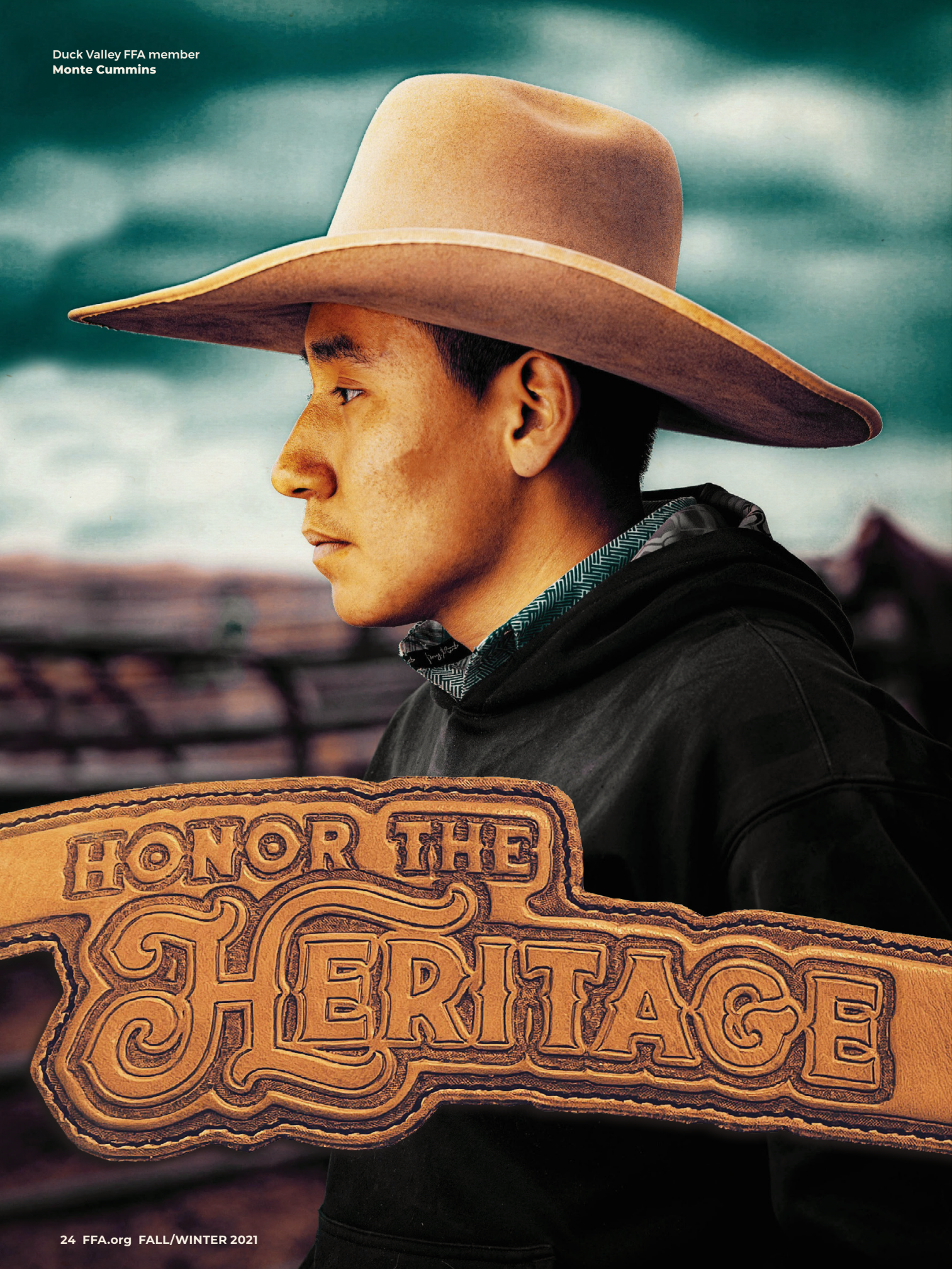
FFA is an everyday part of the job too. "Through FFA, I've learned some of life's most valuable lessons, like work ethic and resiliency," Colston says, noting that raising livestock taught her responsibility, public speaking honed her leadership abilities, chapter conducting helped her learn to work well with others, and interviewing for FFA scholarships prepped her for the real world. Each required her to step outside her comfort zone, which provided some of her best opportunities, she says. "Have faith and trust that you're equipped with the ability to succeed — and that you can make an impact on those around you," Colston adds.

Find career opportunities through the FFA Forever Blue Network at **ForeverBlueNetwork.org.**

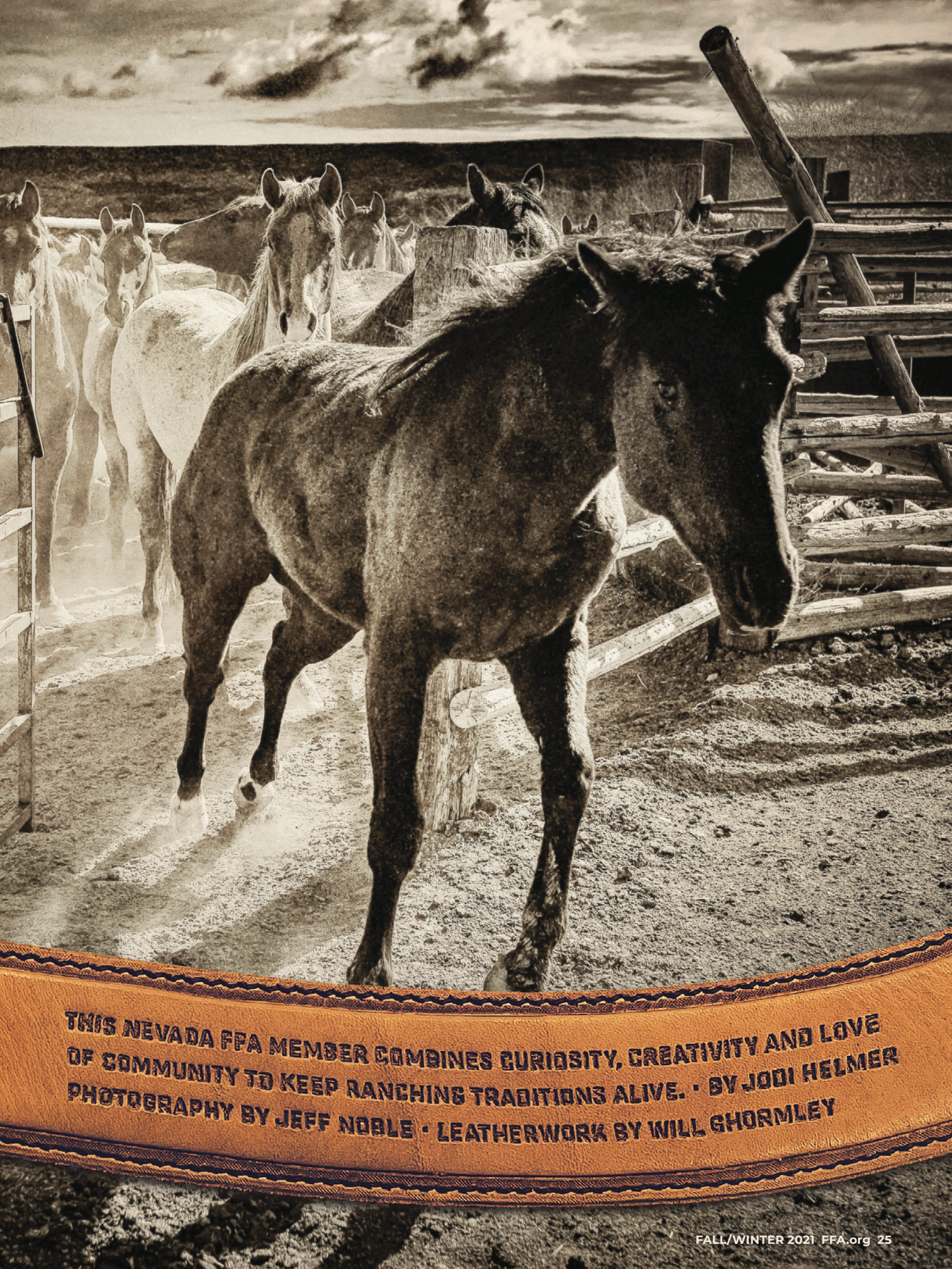
Skyla Colston, associate manager, new store marketing at Tractor Supply Company, attributes some of her career success to FFA experiences.

FFA is an everyday part of the job. "Through FFA, I've learned some of life's most valuable lessons, like work ethic and resiliency," Colston says.

Photography: Courtesy Skyla Colston



Duck Valley FFA member
Monte Cummins



THIS NEVADA FFA MEMBER COMBINES CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY AND LOVE OF COMMUNITY TO KEEP RANCHING TRADITIONS ALIVE. • BY JODI HELMER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF NOBLE • LEATHERWORK BY WILL GHORMLEY

When Monte Cummins saw Ryan Carpenter baling hay on his ranch, he offered to help.

Although Cummins was only 8 years old – too small to move a hay bale or drive the four-wheeler – Carpenter welcomed the assistance.

"From then on, Monte would come and help no matter what we were doing," Carpenter recalls. "If it was snowing or raining, if we were branding or feeding cows, Monte was there."

Although agriculture is an important industry for the members of the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes who live on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in Idaho and Nevada, Cummins didn't grow up on a farm. Instead, he learned everything he knows about raising cattle from Carpenter.

"My dad used to work for a local ranch and I rode horses with him for a while, but I was interested in starting my own herd and trying to learn something new," Cummins recalls. "I like to rope and ride, and I was always running around the community helping people."

Community members noticed. Someone gifted him a horse and, almost every season, a grateful neighbor branded a heifer for Cummins, helping him build his own herd. Today, he ropes and rides, running his own 20-head herd of Black Angus-cross commercial cows across the wide-open plains in Nevada and Idaho.

"What I like about having my own herd is that I have the opportunity to make a bigger and better business for my future," Cummins says.

Above: Ryan Carpenter pounds a pattern into a leather coaster. Left: Horseshoes line the walls of a barn on the Walker-Carpenter Ranch. Opposite, clockwise from top left: Assorted leatherworking tools line the workshop walls; a pitchfork and hay are signs of a working ranch; Cummins is all smiles.

Personal Growth Through FFA

Carpenter was a willing mentor. In addition to operating a cattle ranch, he is also the agriculture education instructor and FFA advisor at Owyhee High School in Owyhee,

Nev. He recruited Cummins to join Duck Valley FFA when he started high school.

"Our chapter right now has almost a 100% native student population," Carpenter says. "We've also had two state officers, including one who was the first native Nevada state president."

FFA has provided Cummins with numerous opportunities. He's competed in the agriscience fair, participated in livestock judging and horse judging, and competed in an agriculture mechanics competition. Through FFA, he's been able to travel throughout Nevada and meet other members with similar interests.

"Being in FFA helped me communicate with other people and learn the management side of the ranching business," he says.

Cummins, now a senior, is his chapter's president. He used his interest in cattle as inspiration for his supervised agricultural experience (SAE).

The SAE, he explains, required him to keep detailed records of his cattle operation, from the weights and colors of his branded heifers to their feed ratios and medicine doses.

Every fall, he decides which heifers to keep; he breeds them, sells most of his steers, and prepares for calving the following spring. Thanks to his relationships with other ranchers on the reservation, including Carpenter, he has help managing the herd and sells them through the same channels. The SAE, he explains, helped him determine the cost of running the operation and made him a better rancher.

"It helped me track the cattle and keep an eye on them better," he explains.

For Carpenter, it's gratifying to see FFA members embrace ranching and apply it to their studies.

"It's very encouraging to see students like Monte who are happy to work hard in a very challenging business for the love of the life more than the money," he says. "Some years are profitable and some are not, but kids like him just keep trying to make it work, and that is exactly what the agriculture industry needs to thrive.

"Ranching and cowboys and horses are a very culturally important part of this community," Carpenter adds. "Millions of dollars come into this community through a handful of ranches every year, and most of that money stays right here."

Opposite, top: Carpenter, the Duck Valley FFA advisor, stops outside a barn on Walker-Carpenter Ranch.
Opposite, bottom: Cummins stops to talk by a saddle made by Carpenter.
Above: Cummins designs a leather coaster.

Western Traditions Come to Life

Scan this code with your smartphone's camera to watch our video about Cummins' and Carpenter's leatherwork.

Learning an Old Craft

Working on the Walker-Carpenter Ranch, which Carpenter operates with his wife, also allowed Cummins to pursue another passion: leatherworking.

Cummins learned the traditional craft from his dad. He started using leather to make coasters, carefully carving designs, stamping the leather and polishing the edges until each was a work of art.

In a shop on the ranch, Carpenter, a professional saddlemaker, encouraged Cummins to tackle larger projects. He makes headstalls for the horses, cutting the leather, gluing pieces together, shaping and stamping each one until perfect. Cummins has also made a belt, camera strap and several pairs of chaps, honing his technique.

"Anybody can learn leatherworking, but you have to really push yourself to try to achieve some of these things that Monte is doing," Carpenter says. "He has a lot of natural creativity and talent."

Carpenter, who is making Cummins a custom saddle as a graduation present, suspects there might come a time when his student takes over the shop, carrying on the tradition of making handcrafted leather saddles. In the meantime, Cummins continues to hone his skill and admits that turning scraps of leather into beautiful, functional pieces "feels kind of good."

"A couple of times, I didn't expect it to look as good as it did, and it just kind of motivates me to do a better job every time," he says. "I get to use my creativity and it's something I really enjoy doing."

Although Cummins has sold his coasters and chaps, tucking the money into a checking account for his future, he admits that pursuing the traditional craft is about much more than earning an income.

"I think it's very important to learn these skills so I can pass them on to the younger generation," he says.

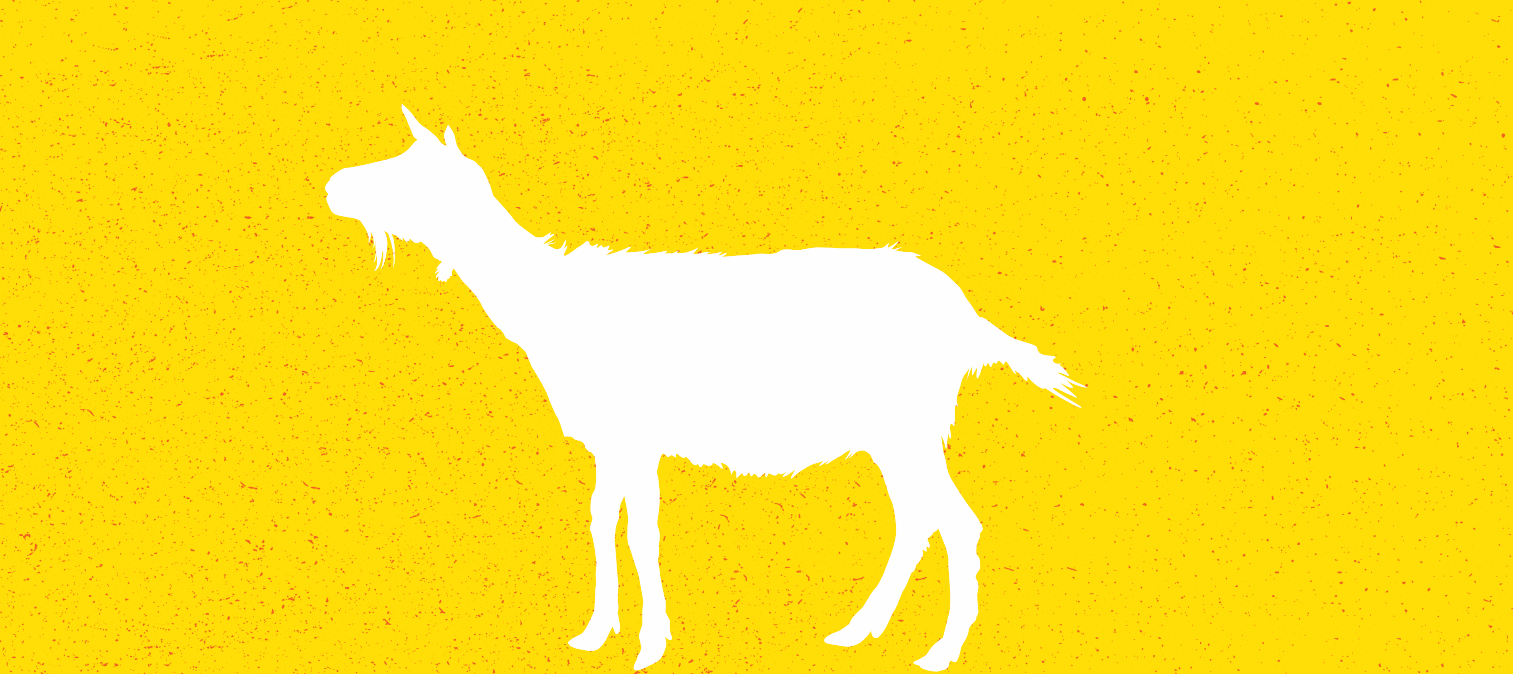
It's also important to Cummins to continue running cattle and preserve the ranching tradition on the reservation. The knowledge he's gaining through agriculture education classes, FFA activities and ongoing mentoring with Carpenter ensures that he'll have the skills to run his own ranch and make his community proud.

"Honestly, I think it would have a really big effect on this community [if my generation didn't carry on the ranching tradition] because our agricultural industry would just basically go downhill; there would be nobody to keep passing it on," he says. "It's important to keep this community in agriculture." •

For more information about SAEs, including ideas and inspiration, check out **SAEForAll.org.**

Paper background: pablohart, Getty Images

A goat yoga event attendee gets up close and personal with a friendly goat.



FFA From the Ground Up

It took 10 years for John Jay Senior High School educators to convince the school administration to support an FFA chapter. Now, through events like goat yoga, members bring a new appreciation of agriculture to their community. By Katie Navarra · Photography by Peter Ardito

Dutchess County in New York was a dairy farming hub – until tech giant IBM planted a massive campus there in 1962. Soon, 2 million square feet of buildings sprouted on 300 acres of former farm fields.

As people began to move north out of New York City in pursuit of jobs and a suburban lifestyle, the demographics of the community shifted. Parents encouraged children to become doctors, engineers or lawyers – not farmers.

In just two years, the newly established John Jay FFA Chapter has changed that perspective, and members also have become inspired by the opportunities in agriculture, even while living in a suburban setting.

Challenges of Starting a New Chapter

It wasn't easy bringing agriculture education to John Jay Senior High School, which is part of the Wappingers Central School District. High school biology teacher Patrick Hancock led the decade-long crusade to connect students to agriculture in hopes of providing them with hands-on experiences. In 2009, he proposed raising a school garden and a few chickens. It was denied. He tried again and again with no success.

"Given the number of people with urban roots, farming had a stigma attached to it," Hancock says.

In 2019, a change in school leadership allowed Hancock the chance to make another plea. When he finally got buy-in from a newly hired school administrator, he decided chartering an FFA chapter would offer a more comprehensive opportunity, introducing students to all facets of agriculture. Plus, the support from the national and state organizations provided the credibility to get approval.

The biggest hurdle was convincing the district administration and the board of education that FFA was more than a school club, according to Paul Albanese, assistant principal and advisory committee member for the chapter. Albanese, a New York City transplant, says the turning point was when advocates showcased the value of FFA; it's a program that enhances a student's education in various arenas, including science, business, public speaking and farming itself.

"Once everyone was informed [about FFA], networking began, then everyone came together to create a strong chapter from the ground up," he says.

An agricultural education incentive grant co-funded by Cornell University and the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets kick-started their efforts. The grant funded a high tunnel, or hoop house, behind the school for growing flowers and vegetables. Chapter activities quickly expanded into showing cattle, participating in Creed speaking and ag issues forum competitions, and creating a new animal science class.

An Agricultural Community Restored

The local farming community embraced the chapter from the beginning.

“Before FFA, I had no idea what I wanted to do... but I never thought of a career in animal science.”
-Lydia McDonough, FFA chapter president

A beef farmer teaches members how to prepare to show beef cattle and provides access to animals for competition. An equine veterinarian with a herd of sheep hosts an intern to help with the lambing process and vaccinations and also to learn about overall herd health. Greenhouse owners and managers serve on the chapter advisory board, eager for members to jump into the horticulture field.

Charlotte Bartush, 2020-21 John Jay FFA secretary, didn't come from a farm family and often felt her suburban community discouraged her from exploring jobs in the industry. FFA has given her the confidence to pursue an agricultural career.

"FFA has encouraged me to take the steps to further my agricultural involvement," Bartush says. "I'm most passionate about dairy cattle, so I plan to go to State University of New York College of Agriculture and Technology at Cobleskill to explore careers related to that, whether it be marketing or tending to the livestock care. I've even considered becoming an ag teacher."

FFA has provided John Jay FFA members with valuable experiences and led them down career paths they hadn't previously considered.

"Before FFA, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I knew I liked animals and I had a small herd of Alpine dairy goats, but I never thought of a career in animal science," says Lydia McDonough, 2020-21 chapter president. "Through FFA, I have shadowed a few vets and worked with all different types of animals, and I realized I had a passion. My current plan is to get a four-year animal science degree, then go on to vet school. FFA helped me realize the veterinary sciences were not too out of reach for me."

"Our students are very fortunate to have access to these experiences," says John Jay FFA co-advisor and biology teacher Mary Jane McFarland. "I have a former student at Cornell studying plants because of joining FFA last year, and several students are now considering other ag-related careers."

Members have already created a buzz in the community. Although COVID-19 canceled many of their first-year activities in 2020, John Jay FFA members participated in District Creed and ag issues events, earning top placings in both.

"I have never been good with public speaking, but the senior Creed speaking event and agricultural issues event allowed me to become a better communicator, especially with a topic I am passionate about – advocating for agriculture," Bartush says. She placed first at the district and substate levels in 2021.

Advocating in Unique Ways

Members are enthusiastic about sharing agriculture with suburban neighbors and find unique ways to engage with them. The chapter's goat yoga fundraiser landed 300 attendees – some driving from other parts of the state and New Jersey to participate. The chapter took advantage of the growing trend of animal-based yoga sessions with the goal of educating people about farming. Additional event activities included milking demonstrations and opportunities for participants to bottle-feed a baby goat.

"We hope to use goat yoga as a community event where we can expose the younger generation to agriculture and make FFA more prominent in Dutchess County," McDonough says.

McDonough's mother suggested goat yoga after seeing videos on YouTube and exclaimed, "You have to do that as an FFA fundraiser." The chapter launched a simple website for registration and promoted it daily during school announcements, through posts on social media and within the community. All four sessions for each of the five event days sold out weeks before the event. The event raised about $7,500 to go toward travel expenses for the next state competition.

"I'm overwhelmed with excitement," McFarland says. "It was a great way for our community to know about John Jay FFA and what we have to offer. Seeing the excitement in the children's eyes when they see, pet and

Opposite: John Jay FFA President Lydia McDonough milks a goat for a demonstration.
Top left: Teachers from Wappingers Central School District hold tight to wiggly baby goats.
Top right: Two goats aren't too shy to join a goat yoga attendee on her mat.

Above: Goat yoga attendees of all ages get down and dirty to practice a stretch.
Opposite left: John Jay FFA Secretary Charlotte Bartush holds tightly to a baby goat.
Opposite right: Kerri Roger, math teacher at John Jay High School, was the yoga instructor for the goat yoga event.

bottle-feed the goats makes all the event planning so worth it. Who knows, an experience like this could initiate a career pathway in veterinary or animal science for some students of any age."

All in for FFA

Mikayla LeClair, 2020-21 chapter sentinel, was nervous about joining FFA. She signed up on a whim after a friend suggested it. LeClair has cousins who raise chickens, goats and horses; she was already volunteering at a local environmental education center, teaching kids how to care for farm animals, grow gardens and learn about agriculture. She took the jump and joined FFA and says she is thankful she did.

"FFA has given me friends who have the same interests and made it possible for me to get more into agriculture, like learning how to milk cows at a dairy farm and how to show cattle," LeClair says. "I like being able to learn about agriculture in a way I never thought I could. Even though I will not be pursuing an agricultural major in college, I will continue to use the skills I have gained since joining FFA, and I am excited to see where our club will go in the future."

For Sara Snowden, 2020-21 chapter treasurer, FFA rekindled her love for an industry she grew up in.

"When I was younger, I rode horses every day and showed dairy cows. Unfortunately, I had to give up that lifestyle when my dad passed away," Snowden says. "FFA has given me the opportunity to revive the life I lived as a kid and gives me a sense of nostalgia."

McFarland sees, through her students, that FFA provides endless opportunity.

"FFA is like an onion. There are so many layers," she says. "When we think we have a handle on things, we find more layers – all in a good way." •

TIPS FOR STARTING A NEW CHAPTER

Consider this advice from John Jay FFA advisors Patrick Hancock and Mary Jane McFarland.

- **Don't give up!** Sometimes it's a waiting game until the right leaders are in place and receptive to the idea.
- **Explain all the opportunities and careers FFA encompasses.** Hancock and McFarland found that people thought FFA was limited to traditional farming. Once the suburban community understood that FFA prepares students for leadership roles and all aspects of agriculture and conservation, they were willing to embrace it.
- **Start small.** With so many options for getting involved, it can feel overwhelming. Hancock and McFarland focused on the Creed Speaking and Ag Issues competitions first, and they are adding additional activities one at a time.
- **Connect with the state FFA office and other chapters in the region.** All are willing to share insights and offer support.

For more information about the Agricultural Issues Forum Leadership Development Event (LDE), visit FFA.org/Agricultural-Issues-Forum. To learn more about how to start a chapter in your area, visit **FFA.org/Start-An-FFA-Chapter.**

[PERSONAL GROWTH]

AG EDUCATION *on the* MOVE

DeWitt Central FFA creates a mobile ag education trailer with funds from the Grants for Growing program.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

Agricultural education is on the go in DeWitt, Iowa.

On a DeWitt Central FFA officer retreat in 2019, Megan Clark, who currently serves as the chapter's vice president, introduced the idea for a project aimed at debunking myths and misconceptions about agriculture and relaying accurate information about the ag industry. She and her fellow officers decided to create a mobile agricultural education trailer that would make it possible to share their message across the DeWitt community – and beyond.

"I show cattle, and I've met a lot of people who have heard misinformation or seen things on social media about agriculture that aren't true," Clark says. "With this mobile trailer, we are sharing facts in an engaging, memorable way so that anyone who visits will walk away understanding not only how important the agriculture industry is, but also how hard producers work to feed and clothe us."

To get the project underway, the DeWitt Central FFA applied for and secured a grant through the Grants for Growing program, sponsored by Tractor Supply Company. Progress was stalled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the chapter didn't give up on its goal. Members are excited to share their finished trailer with attendees at community events, county fairs and the Iowa FFA Leadership Conference.

"We have an incredibly supportive alumni chapter, and they completed all the wiring for the trailer," Clark says. "We've also been working closely with Exhibit Farm to feature ag-based interactive elements and activities, and eventually, we hope to have enough content that we can swap things in and out. For example, we can deck out the trailer to highlight livestock for a particular event, then switch it up to focus on fresh produce."

Although the mobile trailer is primarily geared toward children, Clark and her fellow chapter members have made sure to include elements for adults to enjoy, too.

"The trailer has a poster with animals that our guests can color in, as well as an iPad with different apps like Hay Day and Farming Simulator, where they can create their own virtual farms," Clark says. "We also have ag trivia and outdoor elements, including a beanbag toss into a cow cutout board, and anyone who participates can win a prize. Ultimately, we want to help people of all ages develop a clearer understanding of how agriculture impacts their daily lives. If they leave feeling inspired to pursue a career in ag or become an advocate, that's even better."

Interested in receiving your own grant to complete a project that will grow your classroom or FFA chapter or increase agricultural awareness? Check out the Grants for Growing program at ***FFA.org/Grants-For-Growing.***

DeWitt Central FFA members share their finished trailer with attendees at community events, county fairs and more.

Photography: Courtesy Amy Grantz

5 TOPICS YOU CAN EXPLORE IN THE FFA BLUE ROOM

THE ALL-VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE IS OPEN TO EVERYONE.

When the FFA Blue Room launched at the 2018 National FFA Convention & Expo, it was an instant hit. Attendees waited in lines circling the building for a chance to get an exclusive look at the latest innovations from key industry players.

"It was limited because it had to be because of the physical space we were in," says Kate Wehby, an education specialist with the National FFA Organization who coordinates the FFA Blue Room. While a small space invited one-on-one conversations integral to the experience, it meant a cap on both people and time.

That changed with 2020. The FFA Blue Room, like convention, went entirely online — and that's where it will stay. Instead of a game of luck to see if you can get a spot in the FFA Blue Room, it's a video game that anyone with login credentials can play. "Thousands more were able to experience it," Wehby says, bringing the FFA Blue Room closer than ever to its mission of exposing everyone to the future of ag tech.

Here's a snapshot of what's inside.

1. Future of agriculture

This is the big one. The primary goal of the FFA Blue Room is to "connect from now to the future," Wehby says. "In general, ag is hugely tech-driven," she adds, so sponsors and speakers will showcase their latest STEM advancements. (See "Who's Inside?" at right.) This year, that includes innovations in recyclable plastic food packaging, radio-frequency identification (RFID) animal tracking, soil health and clothing fibers. A separate "Innovation Station" will spotlight the work of notable start-ups and young companies.

2. Urgency for sustainability

The services presented highlight how to protect and maximize resources. "We want students to ask, 'OK, what do I do?'" Wehby says. The FFA Blue Room can show them it might mean choosing a different career or developing an aptitude for a certain technology, she adds.

3. Virtual adventure through the value chain

Set up like a 3D video game, each virtual booth of the FFA Blue Room is a step on the agriculture value chain: starting with research and development, then to preproduction, production, supply chain, end product, sales, service and support, and ending with the consumer. Sponsors will have displays inside the section their companies serve, and you'll be able to snag rewards for completing games and activities they offer.

4. Expanded career ideas

By listening to and interacting with various speakers, "You could discover a career you didn't even know was connected to agriculture," Wehby says. Some students have even discovered new ideas that have led them to explore a different career path or a cool new internship.

5. Innovative classroom experience

"Our goal is to make the FFA Blue Room an evergreen tool" that teachers can use year-round, complete with comprehensive lesson plans, Wehby says. Minus live functionalities, such as Q&A sessions, the virtual experience will remain open for any educators who want to bring this piece of convention to their classroom.

Visit **Convention.FFA.org/The-Blue-Room** for the most up-to-date FFA Blue Room offerings.

- **By Lauren Denton**

WHO'S INSIDE?

The 2021 FFA Blue Room is sponsored by Microsoft. Other companies presenting their latest and greatest include:

- **AEM**
- **BASF**
- **Bayer**
- **Cargill**
- **Elanco Animal Health**
- **Firestone Ag**
- **General Mills**
- **John Deere**
- **Merck Animal Health**
- **Sealed Air**
- **Syngenta**
- **Valent**

ON THE RECORD: SCOTT STUMP

Meet the new National FFA CEO, Scott Stump. As you'll learn, his passion for agricultural education, career and technical education, and, of course, FFA, shines through his values and experiences.

– By Kasey Riebel

“I’ve seen FFA from many vantage points as a member, teacher, state leader, national FFA staff member and as a parent. I know first-hand the positive difference FFA can make in the lives of our members.”

– SCOTT STUMP

Scott Stump, FFA CEO, has dedicated his career to bettering agricultural education, career and technical education, and FFA.

Q: Let’s step back to your childhood. What were you interested in and how were you exposed to FFA?

A: I grew up in an agriculture education family. My dad taught agriculture for 37 years in northeastern Indiana, and my mom was my 4-H advisor. I was never pressured to follow the path, but agriculture was a big part of our family culture growing up. We were all involved and took advantage of all the wonderful opportunities our education and experiences had to offer.

Q: How did your upbringing lead you to a career in agricultural education?

A: Interestingly, I tried to get away from agriculture education. When I started at Purdue University in the fall of 1985, I initially followed a biochemical and agricultural engineering degree path. I thoroughly loved my biochemistry classes and was fascinated by the emerging technology at the time. But then I spent a year as an Indiana FFA state officer traveling to classrooms across the state. It was in those classrooms that I found my purpose – helping people grow and building systems that build people.

Q: What are the things you are most proud of accomplishing in your role with the United States Department of Education?

A: In my role as assistant secretary of career, technical and adult education, I worked to provide a funding stream for career, technical and agriculture education programs. That funding allows for professional development opportunities for educators and equipment updates in agriculture education classrooms so students can access the latest technology, for example. We also ensured that state and local programs had the flexibility to allocate funds in ways that best fit state and local needs.

Q: What drew you to pursue a leadership position with the National FFA Organization?

A: I’ve seen FFA from many vantage points as a member, teacher, state leader, national FFA staff member and as a parent. I know firsthand the positive difference FFA can make in the lives of our members. My experiences have prepared me to guide FFA into years of growth, and when the opportunity with FFA opened, it seemed like I was being called to serve in a different way.

Q: What most excites you about the future of FFA?

A: We’re in a time of change and flux, and that always leads to opportunities. In the disruption we’ve experienced in the last year, we’ve learned how technology is a tool to help reach those students we haven’t reached before – providing access to more students across the country to grow them as leaders and set them up for career success. I’m excited to dig in with the board, staff, state leaders, sponsors and stakeholders to identify the shared opportunities for growth to guide our path forward. We know we have opportunities to grow in underrepresented or marginalized communities where agriculture education has not been previously offered. Because we’re in an industry that’s calling us to do more and build a skilled workforce, we get to be part of preparing this generation to step into roles and join agribusiness employers or step out boldly as entrepreneurs and run their own businesses.

Photography: Courtesy National FFA Organization; Getty Images, Larry Gerbrandt

FFA *in the* USA

During the busy holiday season – between making sugar cookies and decorating the tree – dedicate time to continue Living to Serve in your communities. Read on for service project ideas from fellow members across the country.

– Compiled by Julie Woodard

Arkansas

For the winter holidays, FFA chapters in the state host food packaging workshops to provide meals to families in need throughout their communities.

Connecticut

Northwestern FFA donated poinsettias to a local nursing home and produce to a local soup kitchen during the holiday season.

Delaware

During National FFA Week, Delaware FFA organized a statewide clothing drive for Code Purple shelters. The state association donated more than 4,000 items.

Florida

The Orange County FFA Federation created a virtual AgScape Room, an escape room-style experience through which students were educated about the agricultural industries across central Florida.

Hawaii

Waipahu FFA is helping Mālama Pu'uloa, a community stewardship organization, plant pili grass and clear invasive plants from Pearl Harbor.

Idaho

Each year, members of Deary FFA write letters to terminally ill children in hospitals to add cheer to their days.

Illinois

Byron FFA started a Christmas tree recycling program and collected nearly 100 trees from its community last year. The trees were made into mulch to be used in Byron city parks.

Indiana

Thanks to a generous partnership with Ceres Solutions, Indiana FFA members gathered during a statewide conference in 2020 to pack 100 Thanksgiving meals for families in need.

Kansas

Ellsworth FFA partnered with Wilson Lake Fisheries and the Hays Bass Anglers Association last December to collect Christmas trees and use them for fish habitat conservation.

Kentucky

Madisonville North Hopkins FFA made wooden toys on a computer numerical control (CNC) machine to donate as Christmas gifts for the Salvation Army's Toys for Tots drive.

Louisiana

Crowley FFA has some paw-some members! In November, members washed dogs and raised donations for its local animal shelter. This was made possible by the generosity of Tractor Supply Company.

Maryland

The Boonsboro Middle School FFA Chapter's talented members used their Living to Serve Grant to help build the Mark A. Smith Memorial Park in Sharpsburg, Md.

Michigan

The 2020-21 Michigan FFA theme was Seek to Serve, and the state officers lived out this theme by giving back to more than 8,600 members. This past winter, the officers wrote handwritten letters to members, created a Christmas podcast and published a "12 Days of Christmas" vlog so members could get to know them.

Minnesota

Randolph FFA participates in a community-wide service project called Adopt a Family, through which members purchase Christmas gifts for a family.

Missouri

Salisbury FFA "Beefed Up Christmas." Chapter members used a grant to purchase beef promotion gift cards for their community food bank and made beef-theme holiday cards to go with the gift cards.

Montana

To give busy parents a break while kids are out of school during the holidays, Big Timber FFA members host a day care to entertain kids while engaging them in agriculture.

Nebraska

Gothenburg FFA members hosted a Thanksgiving coin drive for their local food pantry. The school system nearly doubled its goal of $1,600, raising more than $3,000.

Nevada

Smoky Valley FFA decorates boxes and fills them with snacks and cards to send to troops overseas.

New Hampshire

Each December, one of the state's 12 chapters hosts a statewide holiday party. Attendees also engage in a service project, such as a pet food drive.

New Jersey

Cape May Tech FFA members organized a cleanup project for the marsh behind their school. Members removed trash from the marsh to help maintain a healthy environment.

North Carolina

Over the holiday season, West Rowan FFA helped feed 16 families through a Vegetable in a Box take-home book bag program.

Thank you, state officers, for providing news and events for your states.

Photography and Illustrations: Getty Images, fominox, A. Martin UW Photography, Artnivora Studio, Hugh Whitaker, Janine Lamontagne

Ohio

Felicity Franklin FFA hosts a donation drive for winter clothing. Members create a confidential store where students can "shop" for much-needed items.

Oklahoma

For the past seven years, the Oklahoma FFA Hunger Challenge has continued to grow. In 2021, 177 chapters helped those with food insecurities.

Oregon

To spread holiday cheer, the state officer team makes blankets and care baskets for families.

Pennsylvania

Garden Spot FFA hosted a blood drive and take-out lasagna meal fundraiser in memory of Tobias Leaman, an FFA alumnus who died of cancer. Proceeds were donated to the Ronald McDonald House Charities.

Puerto Rico

FFA members participated in a special event, Among FFA, where they played the online game Among Us and met other FFA members from across the island.

South Dakota

Montrose FFA gives back to the community through its Feed a Farmer event every harvest season. Members provide grab-and-go hamburgers, chips and desserts to farmers at a local Central Farmers Cooperative.

Tennessee

Tennessee FFA hosted a statewide service project called the Blessing Bag Program to gift supplies to people in need. FFA members collected items to fill 904 bags. Macon County FFA donated its bags to Macon Community Hospital staff members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Texas

Texas FFA partnered with Blue Jeans Go Green to give old denim a new purpose. Members recycled thousands of blue jeans to turn into new and useful items, like UltraTouch Denim Insulation.

Utah

Farmers Feeding Utah is an organization that connects farmers and FFA chapters with those in need. Formed by the Utah Farm Bureau, the organization helped feed struggling families during the pandemic.

Virginia

During the holidays, Virginia FFA hosted a statewide meal packing event. State officers delivered meal kit supplies to chapters, and chapter members assembled the meal kits to distribute in their local communities.

Wisconsin

It was a Culver's Christmas for Cuba City FFA. The chapter purchased $500 in Culver's gift cards and gave them to sixth through 12th graders, asking them to pay it forward.

Wyoming

Buffalo FFA got into the holiday spirit with its Christmas Kid Shoppe. Community members donated items, and members hosted a shop for local children to pick up gifts for family or friends.

Arizona

Casa Grande FFA knows service! Each year, members pack more than 25 Thanksgiving Day meals, including chapter-raised birds, to donate to families.

Members, submit your chapter updates at FFA.org/Submit-Your-Story.

MEDIA CENTER

ARTS & CULTURE IN AGRICULTURE – By Jessica Wesson

VIDEO BLOGS

Five Ag Influencer Accounts to Follow on YouTube

Fresh Air Farmer
Andrew Campbell

Andrew Campbell is a Canadian dairy farmer. His YouTube channel features his life on the farm and showcases the facilities and technology it takes to successfully raise dairy cattle. Campbell also visits other farms in a series of videos to learn different farming tactics.

The Farmer's Life
Brian Scott

With three generations working on the same farm, life can get hectic, but that doesn't stop Brian Scott from sharing the adventures on his family's farm from season to season. He and his wife, Nicole, raise two kids in Indiana and grow corn, popcorn, soybeans and wheat with Brian's dad and grandfather.

Epic Gardening
Kevin Espiritu

Growing a garden can be challenging, especially in an urban setting. Kevin Espiritu is passionate about teaching people how to grow their own food in a variety of environments. His YouTube channel features tips and tricks for urban gardening, organic gardening, container gardening, houseplant care and vegetable gardening.

This Farm Wife
Meredith Bernard

A farmer, wife and mother of two, Meredith Bernard has her hands full. She uses her YouTube channel to share the ins and outs of her family's North Carolina beef cattle operation with her audience. Along with videos about cattle ranching and hay production, she highlights life as a mom and wife, as well as the struggles of farming today.

PODCAST

MTSU COLLEGIATE FFA PODCAST

Hear about hot topics in agriculture from college students who are soon to be on the agricultural frontlines.

Home of the Blue Raiders, the Middle Tennessee State University campus is full of movers and shakers. Members of the collegiate FFA chapter used their knowledge to produce Squabbles of the Soil, a podcast highlighting various agricultural topics. Members cover livestock showing, genetically modified organisms, pesticides and bees, precision agriculture, antibiotic use in livestock and more. Each episode comes with a teaching guide for further instruction.

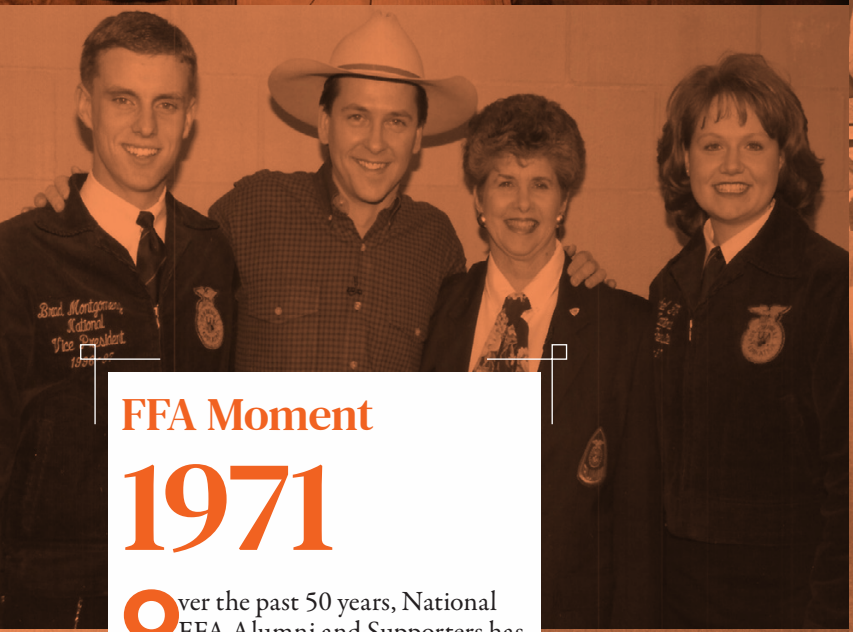
TIK TOK

@reverentwildranch

This regenerative agriculture advocate shares his daily life on the ranch.

Michael Kinsey manages Reverent Wild Ranch in Chickamauga, Ga., and advocates for regenerative agricultural practices by sharing his day-to-day experiences on social media platforms. Life on Reverent Wild Ranch includes moving cattle, evaluating forage, calving and much more. Catch his ranch adventures on TikTok.

Photography: oxygen, Getty Images.



FFA Moment

1971

Over the past 50 years, National FFA Alumni and Supporters has dedicated time, talent and financial resources to ensure the future of FFA. What started as an idea from student delegates in 1969 was officially launched two years later and has grown into a global network of more than 684,000 actively involved volunteers. As the National FFA Organization has grown and evolved, alumni and supporters chapters have worked to meet the needs of FFA chapters. Today, just over 2,400 alumni and supporters chapters exist, representing about one-third of FFA chapters. Alumni and supporters can stay connected with others across the globe through the FFA Forever Blue Network (**foreverbluenetwork.org**), a platform to share job opportunities and ideas that enhance the work being done at the local level.

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