NEW HORIZONS

Fall/Winter 2023

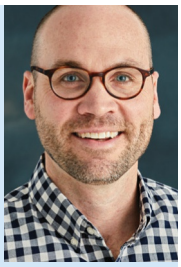
FFA.ORG

95 Years of FFA Traditions

The Land's Legacy

Delaware FFA Members Dig Into History

5 Ways to Prep for National Convention



FFA EXPERIENCES LEAD TO LIFE PASSIONS

It happens all the time. I'm going about my day, preparing stories for FFA New Horizons and FFA.org, and BAM! I learn about an FFA member's story that must be told. One of the things I appreciate most is a clear connection between FFA and a future career. In many cases, FFA experiences turn into passions, which turn into areas of study, which turn into careers.

Victoria Tovar is on that journey.

A recent graduate of William H. Turner Technical Arts High School in Miami, Fla., and an alumnus of the Miami FFA Chapter, Tovar developed a love of animals early in life. "It's always been any animal I see; I instantly want to care for them," she says. "It was always a vision I had."

When Tovar was in fifth grade, her counselor learned of her dream to become a veterinarian and printed her a list of high schools in Miami with programs that prepare students for careers in animal science. Top of the list was the William H. Turner Technical Arts High School, which offers a veterinary assisting program. A few years later, that's right where she landed.

From there, Tovar's passion for animals, which expanded to include cattle and other livestock, took off. So did her involvement in FFA. She served as a Miami FFA Chapter officer for two years and organized workshops to pass on lessons she learned in the show barn. (She's no slouch when it comes to showing livestock. She and her first steer, an Angus-Charolais cross, won grand champion at the county fair in 2022.)

Now in her first semester at Miami Dade College, Tovar is pursuing her dream of becoming a veterinarian. Because of her FFA experiences, she wants to be a large-animal veterinarian and hopes to someday have a farm where urban students can go to learn about animal agriculture and show cattle.

"For me, it really was like this FFA jacket made me feel like I was where I belong," Tovar says.

Learn more about Tovar's journey in "Finding Ag in the City" on page 16.

In this issue, you'll also find articles about historic FFA traditions, national convention prep, STEAM careers and more.

Enjoy, and have a fantastic fall and winter!

Justin Davey

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THE FFA VISION
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 is a resource and support organization that does not select, control or supervise state association, local chapter or individual member activities. Educational materials are developed by FFA in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education as a service to state and local agricultural education agencies.

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The William Penn High School FFA Chapter cultivates a farm that dates to 1701.

Joanna Gomez-Rosas is one of many William Penn High School FFA members to gain exposure to agriculture at the school's urban farm. P. 30

5 Things FROM FFA.ORG

Flag these go-to resources about career research, national convention, the latest FFA merch and more.

96th National FFA Convention & Expo

Enjoy the perks of participating in the convention from afar. Aside from live, gavel-to-gavel session coverage, students can learn about various topics, including how to run a successful small business and the organization's many opportunities for growth. Teachers will gain tools to effectively lead their classrooms and FFA chapters.

FFA Scholarships

Thanks to the selfless individuals and businesses that donate to the National FFA Foundation, FFA members can earn scholarships. Whether you're seeking a four-year degree or hoping to attend a specialized training program, a scholarship is available for you. The application site goes live this fall.

Scan with your phone

ShopFFA.org

Show off your FFA pride at the start of the new school year. A fresh batch of FFA apparel is available, including the 2023-24 annual tee. If you're an officer, check out the officer tees and personalized polos. Turn to the ShopFFA Look Book in the center of this issue to get a glimpse at the latest products, and share your #FFAStyle on social media.

Program of Activities

A key component of an FFA chapter's success is the development of a Program of Activities (POA) that emphasizes cultivating leaders, building communities and strengthening agriculture. Check out our POA planning and documentation resources and start the school year strong with a solid plan. You might qualify for a National Chapter Award.

AgExplorer

Considering your career options? AgExplorer, the most robust ag career tool for teachers and students, has been revamped. The website boasts more than 70 new career profiles and 300 careers, thanks to partner AgCareers.com, as well as three new career focus areas — sustainability, agricultural technology and skilled trades. A renovated career finder, now named My Career Quiz, asks twice as many questions as before to help focus career results.

Start the School Year Right

Try these tips to gain and maintain momentum for a great year.

– By Courtney Leeper Girgis

The start of the school year is a time of energy and fresh beginnings. You can build on your hard work from last year or start something new. If this is your first year in FFA, welcome! You are in for a great adventure, one where you will explore your interests in agriculture, develop career and leadership skills, and meet lifelong friends.

You have to put in the effort, though, to make the most of your FFA experience. As you get back into the swing of school, consider this advice from four National Teacher Ambassadors for FFA.

1. Build on your POA. Your chapter's Program of Activities (POA) is the road map that will guide what your FFA chapter will do this year and why. Nancy Sell, a teacher ambassador from Georgia, says her officers develop each year's POA with the "keep, cull, or keep and tweak" method. They evaluate each activity from the previous year and decide whether they should do it again or make changes. Now that school has started, it's time to work the plan and have fun! Remember to take mental notes for next year's POA planning.

2. Get excited. If you are interested in an FFA event, ask if you can help with planning or show initiative by helping set up or clean up after the event. Also, remember to take photos, especially if you are the chapter reporter. In any case, show your excitement. "Excitement brings increased attendance, increased attendance builds stronger bonds, and strong bonds strengthen the overall makeup of the chapter," says Allison Heald, a teacher ambassador from Alabama.

3. Gain support from your community. Raise awareness among your community — parents, alumni, businesses, school administration, etc. — on what you're doing this year, says J.R. Pierce, a teacher ambassador from Montana. Express your appreciation for them. They'll be your biggest supporters.

4. Be willing to try new things. Stepping outside your comfort zone can be scary. There is a possibility of failure. But it's the only way you'll grow, Pierce adds. Try a new contest or experiment in your supervised agricultural experience this year. Your future self will thank you.

5. Expect to have a good year. "If you go in with a positive mind, you will get positive results," says Millie Chism McKinney, a teacher ambassador from Mississippi.

Ready to build or refresh your POA? Find a variety of helpful resources at **ffa.box.com/v/poaresources.**

Photography: Getty Images, malerapaso

WAYS TO PREPARE FOR NATIONAL CONVENTION

Find out how to make the most of this year's event in Indianapolis.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

If your plans for Nov. 1-4 include attending the 96th National FFA Convention & Expo, it's time to start preparing. Consider these things to ensure you're ready.

1. Check the Weather

Look at the Indianapolis weather forecast for the dates you'll be in town and pack accordingly. Remember to bring your Official Dress!

2. Know the Rules

All attendees are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and the FFA Code of Ethics. Visit **Convention.FFA.org/A-Z-Information-Guide** for a refresher and to review the prohibited items list.

3. Get the App

Download the National FFA Events App (available on the Apple Store and Google Play) to see the full list of events and where they'll take place, including general sessions, workshops, community service opportunities, awards ceremonies and entertainment.

4. Plan Off-Site Activities

As one of the most walkable downtowns in the U.S., Indianapolis leaves little to be desired. Talk to your advisor about trying a local restaurant as a chapter or getting a group together for an educational tour or sightseeing excursion.

5. Stay Connected on Social Media

Follow the National FFA Organization on Instagram (@nationalffa) and Facebook to stay in the know. When posting your own convention-related content and updates, use the hashtag #FFA23.

Learn more about the 96th National FFA Convention & Expo at **Convention.FFA.org.**

Photography: Getty Images, John J. Miller Photography

Go for an SAE Grant

Grady Fox's SAE consisted of breeding, raising, cleaning and selling tilapia. He won a State Proficiency Award for his project in 2022.

Apply for financial assistance when starting or expanding your SAE.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

As a high school freshman, Grady Fox had his sights set on a unique supervised agricultural experience (SAE) — breeding, raising, cleaning and selling tilapia. But to make it happen, he needed financial assistance.

That's where the National FFA Organization's SAE Grant program came in.

"My advisor encouraged me to apply for an SAE Grant, and I ended up receiving $1,000," says Fox, an alumnus and former vice president of the Frankfort FFA in Frankfort, Kan., who now attends Kansas State University. "This allowed me to purchase everything I needed to get started, including tilapia and their food, plus a filter and lights for the tank my school provided. Thanks to the grant, I didn't have to settle for another project that didn't fully align with my interests and goals."

Open to FFA members in grades seven through 12 who demonstrate financial need, the SAE Grant program makes it possible for hundreds of students to start or grow their SAE projects each year with individual grants of $1,000.

To qualify for a grant, members must complete an application and identify at least one Agriculture Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) Pathway that their project fits into.

A Simple Application

"The application process was simple and absolutely worth the short amount of time it took," Fox says. "Many of my fellow chapter members also received SAE Grants, and they all agreed — applying is a no-brainer if you need financial support."

> **"Thanks to the grant, I didn't have to settle for another project that didn't fully align with my interests and goals."**
>
> **– Grady Fox**

Online applications open in October and close Nov. 15, and grant recipients are announced in mid-December after the SAE Grant committee reviews eligible applications. Recipients are required to submit a report by June 30 detailing how they have used their grant funds.

"If I didn't receive an SAE Grant, I would not have been able to afford to pursue this project," says Fox, who won a state proficiency award for his SAE in the specialty animal production — entrepreneurship division at the Kansas FFA Convention in 2022. "I'm so glad there were resources available to me because my SAE was a great learning experience; it taught me about responsibility and made me more financially literate, both of which continue to benefit me today."

Learn more about the SAE Grants available and submit your online application at **FFA.org/SAEGrants**.

Photography: Courtesy of Grady Fox

Attention, Future Ag Teachers

Remember these three things to build a career in agricultural education.

– By Lauren Denton

In honor of National Teach Ag Day on Sept. 21, the National FFA Organization celebrates agriculture teachers and FFA advisors nationwide — not simply for their dedication, but also for raising the next generation of educators.

Is teaching agriculture in your future? Josh Davenport, a 20-year veteran in his 11th year at South Panola High School in Batesville, Miss., shares three important characteristics for anyone who hopes to lead their own classroom.

1. Consider your education.

Choose an agricultural degree program that provides a wide range of courses. "You never know what you might teach," Davenport says. "It could be animals, ag mechanics, horticulture, food science or intro to ag. You can't always say, 'This is what I want to teach.' You have to start somewhere."

Beyond agriculture courses, Davenport says computer and management classes could be beneficial. "As an FFA advisor, you're basically managing everything from fundraising to staying on schedule with contests. You need to be organized in all facets." Spreadsheets, time management and interpersonal skills can help with that.

2. Invest in the students.

"Teaching is not just an 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. job, especially for ag teachers," Davenport notes. "Be prepared to put the time in and go the extra mile." Due to the hands-on nature of agricultural learning experiences and FFA activities, expect many one-on-one opportunities. With that, ag teachers play a key role in helping students "find their niche" and preparing them for "life in general," Davenport says.

Part of that occurs through how you manage your classroom: Set clear expectations, hold students accountable and be consistent. They get a sense that the work doesn't stop just becuase they're away, he says, which teaches them ownership of their projects and results that follow.

3. Be innovative.

"Be willing to change and step outside of the box and go with the trends to maximize the success of your program," says Davenport, noting how community awareness and involvement have grown since he created a Facebook page for the South Panola FFA Chapter.

Want more pointers in your pursuit to becoming an agriculture teacher? Consult the National Council for Agricultural Education at **TheCouncil.FFA.org.**

South Panola FFA advisor Josh Davenport (far right) has been teaching agriculture for 20 years. There's much more to the job than teaching ag, he says.

Photography: FFA

Quiz: A Time-Honored Tradition

– By Jessica Mozo

Think you know a lot about FFA? The National FFA Organization has been around for nearly a century and has a rich history. Test your knowledge and find out how much you really know about FFA traditions and history.

1. What year was the Future Farmers of America established in Kansas City, Mo.?
2. Land for the first FFA-owned national headquarters was purchased near Alexandria, Va., in what year?
3. In 1944, how many FFA members served in the armed services in World War II?
4. When did the National FFA Band first perform at the National FFA Convention, giving musically gifted FFA members the chance to share their talents?
5. In the late 1940s, the first FFA publication honored FFA members who lost their lives while serving in World War II. How many FFA members died in the war?
6. What year did FFA adopt national blue and corn gold as its official colors?
7. FFA sold its millionth FFA jacket in what year?
8. In 2012, how many meals did FFA members pack during the National FFA Convention & Expo's FFA Rally to Fight Hunger?
9. In 2023, FFA student membership hit an all-time high with how many members?
10. Following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned segregation, the New Farmers of America merged with FFA in what year?
11. Memorizing the FFA Creed is one of the first activities new members are assigned. What year was the official FFA Creed adopted?

Answers: 1. 1928, 2. 1929, 3. 138,548, 4. 1947, 5. 7,188, 6. 1929, 7. 1964, 8. 1,005,048, 9. 850,823, 10. 1965, 11. 1930

Photography: Getty Images, MirageC, EyeEm

Social Snapshots

Check out these accounts to stay up to date on all things happening in FFA.

– Lauren Quinlan

- Visit the National FFA Organization **Instagram, @nationalffa,** to view upcoming events and deadlines, access featured stories from *FFA New Horizons* and catch a glimpse of what the 2022-23 National FFA Officer Team is up to.
- The National FFA Organization **Facebook** page includes resources catered toward FFA members, chapters and advisors. You can also use this page to find ways to further your involvement and receive announcements regarding awards, events and special occasions.
- If you prefer short, timely news, follow and interact with **@NationalFFA** on **Twitter.** In addition to receiving quick updates, you'll view posts from national FFA partners, sponsors and supporters.
- Following the National FFA Organization on **LinkedIn** can help you strengthen your personal networking skills. Use this platform to connect with FFA members and industry leaders nationwide in a variety of agricultural contexts and careers.
- The **Forever Blue Network** (ForeverBlueNetwork.org) is a community catered toward FFA alumni seeking to remain involved. After creating a free account, you can view employment opportunities, participate in networking events and more.

When posting about FFA on your personal accounts, remember to include **#nationalffa** and **#foreverblue.** In addition to starting new conversations, your content might be featured by the National FFA Organization. Above all, please join us in building an online community that supports, encourages and celebrates others.

TALKING POINTS: MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

These four strategies can help overcome depression and anxiety. - By Jodi Helmer

It's normal to feel anxious about fitting in at school, stressed about a bad grade or worried about getting into college, but those feelings should be fleeting.

When you experience persistent sadness, excessive worry or loss of interest in your favorite activities, it might be a sign of depression, anxiety or another mental health concern, according to Meredith Draughn, school counselor at B. Everett Jordan Elementary School in Graham, N.C., and 2023 School Counselor of the Year.

"My biggest goal is always to give students hope that they are just a few steps away from better days," she adds.

These four strategies could help you (or a friend) deal with depression or anxiety.

Know you're not alone. Eight million teens have been diagnosed with depression and anxiety. Whether you join a support group through an organization such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) or open up to friends about your feelings, Draughn says, "Some of the most powerful words a student can hear are 'Me too!' when sharing about how they feel."

Talk it out. Tell a school counselor, teacher, FFA advisor or another trusted adult how you're feeling. "Starting the conversation can be hard," Draughn says. "Be brave for 90 seconds and share what is going on."

Call for help. Call or text 988 to reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. The free service connects callers experiencing a mental health crisis with someone to talk to and resources for local support. "There is something powerful about being able to share your feelings with a completely unbiased professional who can teach you new tools and strategies to deal with life's challenges," says Draughn.

Be kind. A friend, classmate or fellow FFA member who is suddenly sad, withdrawn, angry or defiant might be struggling with depression or anxiety. "The biggest way that youth can help their peers in the journey to positive mental health is to be a kind human, online and in person," Draughn says.

She suggests leaving encouraging notes and inviting others to sit with you at lunch or playing board games or pick-up sports, adding, "Making your peer feel loved and heard and supported is definitely the first step; hard situations are never quite as bad when you have a friend to walk alongside of you."

Help Is Available

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): nami.org**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Dial 988**
- **Discuss your feelings with a school counselor, teacher, FFA advisor or another trusted adult.**

Illustration: Getty Images, salim hanzaz

NATIONAL FFA OFFICER

Question & Answer

National officers spend a significant amount of their year of service on the road. Did anyone in particular inspire you as you traveled around the globe?

Andrew Seibel

NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT

One of the coolest moments I've experienced over the last six months was with a student named Haven in Georgia. She taught me new dances before sessions started at their state FFA convention. I have never been one to dance in the past and she encouraged me to sing and dance with fellow FFA members, and it was some of the most fun I've ever had. Members like Haven make us feel at home, welcome and able to push our comfort zones.

Jessica Herr

NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY

During National FFA Week, I met Evan Vander Stoep of the North Clackamas FFA Chapter in Oregon. Evan does not have an agriculture background, but he is involved with the school's 10-acre farm, where he grows barley fodder to feed the school's animals. He also designed and engineered an irrigation controller for the barley production operation, and he collects data every day and makes edits to the system when needed. In the future, he hopes to work in cybersecurity for agricultural drones. That's pretty inspiring.

Ryan Williamson

WESTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

During my time in New Jersey, I visited the Cape May Tech FFA Chapter's aquaculture-focused program. I was inspired by how each student takes ownership of a hands-on project to learn about the native species of Cape May. One of my favorite moments was when Kaylee, a senior, guided me as her class took me crabbing for the first time. While I was not exactly an expert at catching and emptying the crab traps, Kaylee was so patient and shared many laughs with me. She was the best!

MacKenna Clifton

SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

In March, I had the opportunity to visit the island of Oahu for the Hawaii FFA State Convention. I was inspired by the kindness of community members, particularly Nicholas Nishimura. Nicholas was one of the first to welcome me to his association and was always encouraging those around him. For instance, during game night, he got everyone excited about the games and even led his chapter, Waipahu Intermediate, to victory! I truly admire his kindness and genuine spirit.

Karstyn Cantrell

CENTRAL REGION VICE PRESIDENT

Ellie Trabelsi, a member of the Seacoast School of Technology FFA Chapter in New Hampshire, walked into my life full of passion and encouragement. She works tirelessly on her equine projects (it's her passion), she devotes herself to her friends and her community, and she pours herself into FFA. Ellie met me with a warm conversation and thought-provoking questions, but has since maintained a spirit of friendship and support from miles away. Ellie inspires me every day to keep moving forward, never back.

Gracie Murphy

EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I'll never forget Lefa, a high school student in South Africa. He inspired me to have more curiosity about the world. He showed me that instead of taking the easy route and making assumptions about things, we should have an open mind to every situation we encounter. Lefa made me feel seen, heard and valued. I hope to spread the same kindness and optimism that he showed me.

Photography: Copyright © FFA

AG 101

Full STEAM Ahead

– By Lauren Manning

CHOOSING A CAREER PATH CAN BE DAUNTING. However, making a choice doesn't mean you will have to forgo exploring other exciting pathways. If you want to solidify a reliable career path while still ensuring you have a variety of options down the line, consider obtaining a degree in STEAM, which stands for science, technology, engineering, agriculture and math. Obtaining a degree in one of these fields opens countless doors, such as working on farms, developing new machinery, advancing technology and space exploration, or improving the way our society functions. Here are a few specific reasons to consider pursuing a STEAM degree.

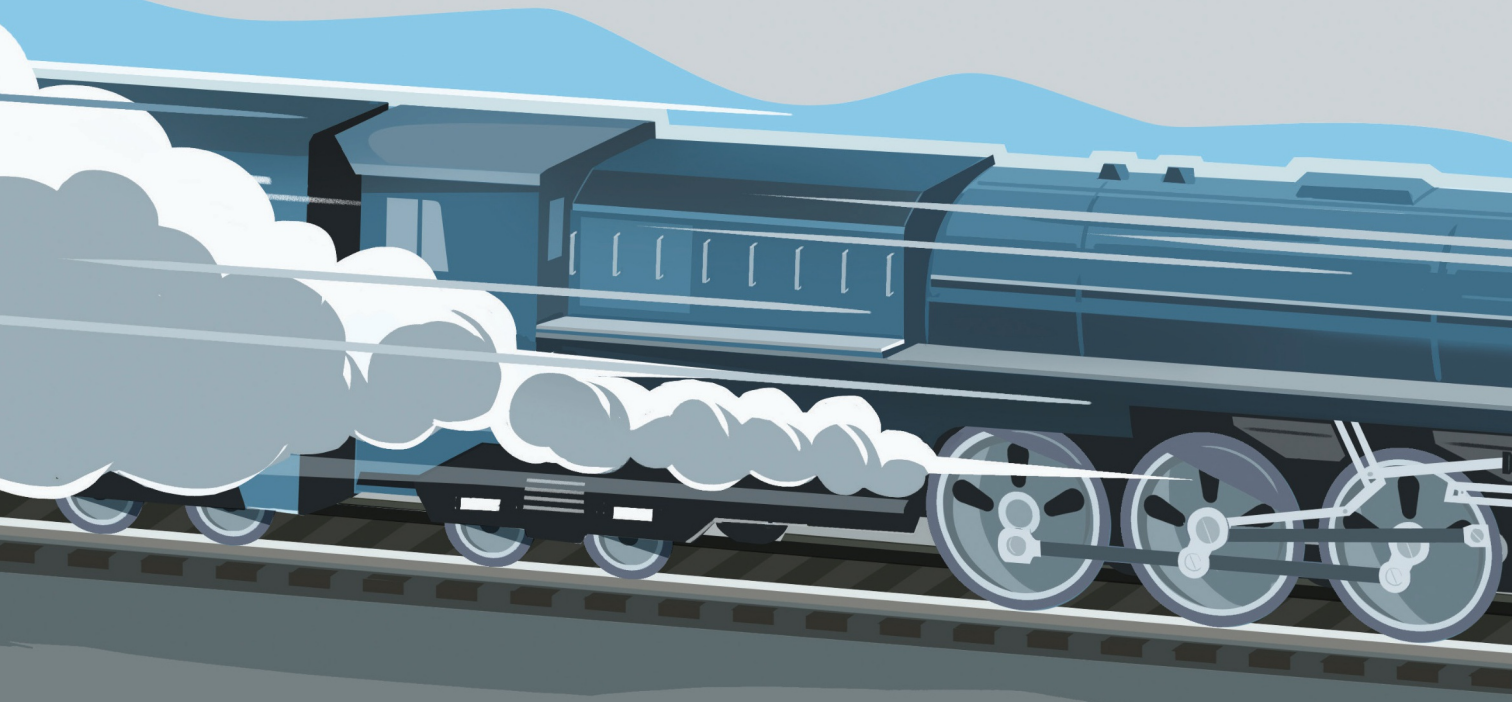


Illustration: Matt Wood

Demand

The need for STEAM professionals is strong around the world. Among the many factors driving this demand are an increasing reliance on digital tools across industries, new discoveries around energy and technology, and the necessity to find sustainable ways to manage the world's growing population.

Advancing Innovation

For some STEAM professionals, one of the most exciting and rewarding parts of the job involves being at the cutting edge of innovation and advancement. Many STEAM careers can lead to positions within startups or established businesses with robust R&D departments. If you are interested in helping to change the world through innovation, a STEAM career can facilitate that objective.

Job Retention

Due in part to the increasing demand for STEAM professionals, job retention in these fields tends to be high. For many professionals, building a retirement pathway and working their way up within a company is an important objective. High job retention also allows you to become an expert in your particular field without the delays involved with moving to new positions.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

This career path offers you an opportunity to work in virtually any sector and to learn about other disciplines within STEAM. You will have multiple options to apply your expertise in a variety of contexts and alongside other professionals.

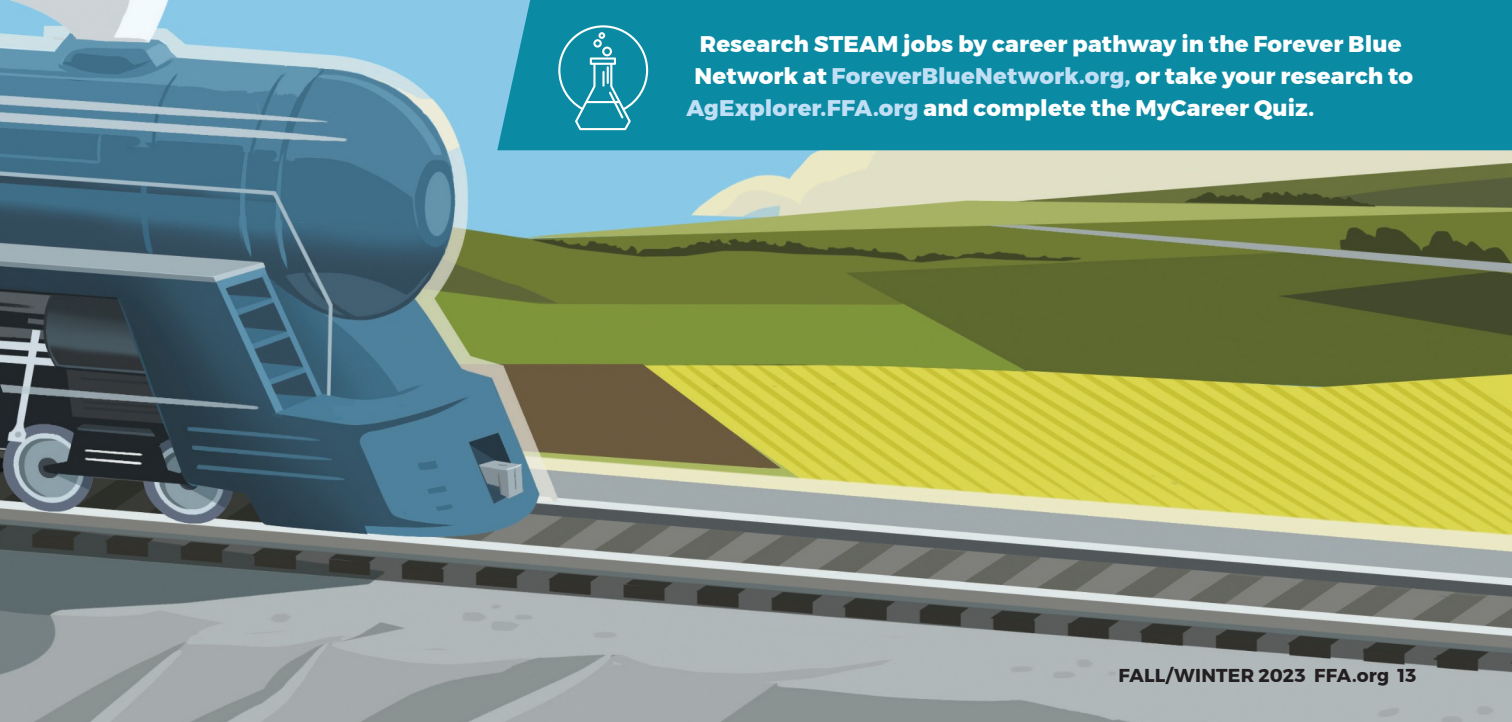
Financial Security

A STEAM degree can be a good way to reach your financial goals. The high demand for STEAM professionals means positions requiring these degrees often provide very competitive salaries, benefits and retirement packages. The opportunity to achieve your financial goals often increases as you progress in your field and build seniority.

Flexibility

Because you can take your STEAM degree in so many directions, professionals in these fields often report a high level of job satisfaction and flexibility. With a STEAM education, you can work in government, for nonprofits, at a major company or in an exciting startup. Some of these positions offer global travel while others allow employees to work remotely.

Research STEAM jobs by career pathway in the Forever Blue Network at ForeverBlueNetwork.org, or take your research to AgExplorer.FFA.org and complete the MyCareer Quiz.



FOR THE GREATER GOOD

THIS FORMER MICHIGAN FFA MEMBER EMBODIES "LIVING TO SERVE" THROUGH MEANINGFUL SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES. - By Lauren Quinlan

A fun volunteer experience led former Michigan FFA member Addy Stuever to address a need within her community and recognize her true passion for serving others.

"My friends and I were handing out items at a local food pantry and noticed the items weren't the same quality and nutritional value as what we were used to eating at our own dinner tables," Stuever says. "As farm kids with livestock in our barns, we decided to use what we had available to make a difference."

Stuever and her friends, all members of the Cass City FFA Chapter in Cass City, Mich., received a $2,500 Living to Serve Grant through the National FFA Organization. This grant, she says, led to the creation of Meating the Need for Our Village, a service project that provides locally raised meat and additional food items to community members. Today, the value of this project's donations and services exceed $65,000.

"At the time, it never felt like an active decision to commit our lives to service," Stuever says. "Over time, we've realized complex factors are at play and ultimately developed a passion and work ethic to address them. I know it has shaped us all in different ways."

MAKING GOOD THINGS HAPPEN

Meating the Need for Our Village inspired Stuever to become a more servant-hearted leader and shaped her desire to collaborate with other change agents at the local, state, national and international levels. In October 2022, Stuever attended the Committee on World Food Security event in Rome, Italy. Through this experience, she represented the United States, interacted with both young people and international leaders, and engaged in conversation about important agricultural topics.

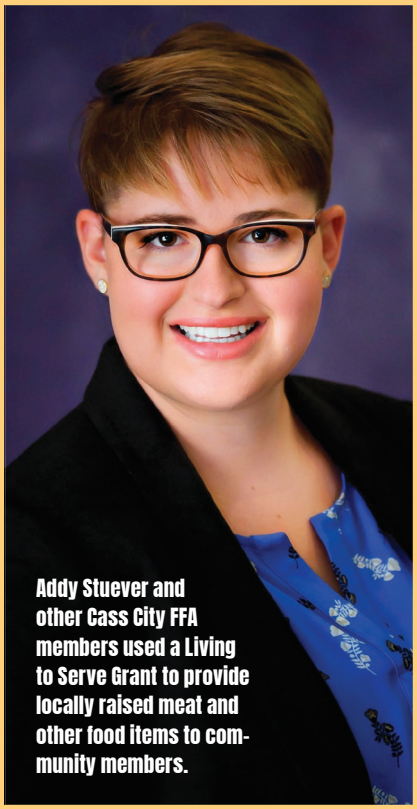
After graduating from Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and sustainability and a minor in leadership and integrated learning, Stuever plans to attend Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and become a pastor.

"I want to continue working with other movers and shakers to make good things happen," Stuever says.

> **"I want us all to realize what we are capable of doing right now."**
>
> **- Addy Stuever**

Through all she has seen and done, Stuever has learned the value in seizing opportunities right in front of her and encourages other FFA members to do the same.

"As young people, we are often told we are the future generation of change makers," Stuever says. "I want us all to realize what we are capable of doing right now."



Addy Stuever and other Cass City FFA members used a Living to Serve Grant to provide locally raised meat and other food items to community members.

Successful Service

Are you inspired to serve? Find ideas and more success stories at **FFA.org/LivingToServe.**

Photography: Courtesy of Christine Photography

Special Arrangements

A horticulture program honors local veterans with custom funeral sprays.

– By Lauren Denton

Courtney Champagne arrived at Silsbee High School in Texas in 2019 to lead an FFA chapter that "just needed a little love," she says. Now, the chapter is not only literally blooming, but also passing that love to the community.

Champagne teaches floral design and runs a full-service, on-site floral shop, called The Tiger Lily, with her advanced students. While they mainly serve the school district, they do extend one particular service to local townspeople — complimentary floral sprays for veterans' funerals.

The program, called Honoring Heroes, is the brainchild of Champagne's husband, who suggested her class make a spray for their neighbor's father, a veteran of the 101st Airborne Division during World War II (the Screaming Eagles). "My students didn't understand the history of paratroopers and WWII, so we stopped and had a history lesson," Champagne says. "We talked about how some of our veterans don't have a lot of people still around to celebrate their lives." That's the moment she knew this needed to be an ongoing project.

She partnered with a local funeral home in August 2021, and they have served one to two funerals every month since. "[The families] are appreciative to the point that they donate to the program," notes Champagne, the daughter of a veteran herself. "The funeral director always has a special spot for our stand, front and center."

A Twofold Teaching Tool

The arrangement is standard and simple: a wire stand with a grapevine wreath; bow; red, white and blue flowers; the veteran's military branch; and a note that reads, "Thank you for your service." It's also a twofold teaching tool: Students learn a basic floral-design skill, should they apprentice with one of the six florists in their small town, and they also learn the power of human connection.

The Honoring Heroes funeral sprays consist of a grapevine wreath; bow; red, white and blue flowers; the military branch; and a note.

"I teach human emotions, not just flower arrangements," Champagne says. "How to take something, create and give back, and I think that's something kids don't have anymore — how to connect with people. Giving them a language of flowers gives them something to connect with people again."

Cheyenne Cooley, former chapter president, now understands that human connection well. "One of the first times I delivered, we met the family and to see the genuine gratitude they had for teenagers who took the time out of their lives for complete strangers. It was eye-opening that sometimes we need to take little moments to thank the people who got us where we are.

"Everyone in this program is so diverse, but we can all agree that the gratitude unites us," says Cooley, now a freshman at Texas A&M studying to be an ag teacher, thanks to Champagne's influence.

"If I can teach my kids to give back and give them a sense of community," Champagne adds, "I'm one step closer to making the world a better place."

Consider this activity for your chapter's Program of Activities and the National Chapter Awards. Learn more about the National Chapter Awards at **FFA.org/Participate/Awards/National-Chapter.**

For inspiration from Silsbee's Tiger Lily, visit **Facebook.com/SHSTigerLily.**

Photography: Courtesy of Courtney Champagne

Finding Ag in the City

This FFA member discovered an affinity for beef cattle and FFA in an unexpected place.

BY COURTNEY LEEPER GIRGIS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF NOBLE

When Victoria Tovar was 7 years old, the family dog bit her. While her family rushed to her aid, upset with Snowy, Tovar's response was one of defense and curiosity.

"It didn't bother me that he bit me," says Tovar, 10 years later. "I just wanted to learn why he reacted this way."

Tovar realizes now she likely hurt Snowy when holding him by his stomach. At the time, the experience served as a surprising confirmation of Tovar's interest in animals.

"It's always been any animal I see; I instantly want to care for them," she says. "It was always a vision I had."

Today, that vision is

This photo: Victoria Tovar is focused on beef cattle and other livestock because of her experience with the Miami FFA Chapter in Florida.

Below: The William H. Turner Technical Arts High School offers a veterinary assisting program through its Academy of Veterinary Science and Agriculture Technology.

In time, and with the help of FFA advisor Everal Miller, Tovar learned how to care for livestock in a challenging environment – southern Florida's hot, humid climate.

shaping up in an unlikely way for the Florida teen, now focused on beef cattle and other livestock because of her experience with the Miami FFA Chapter in Florida.

Pursuing Ag Education

Tovar was born in Venezuela's capital city, Caracas. Mountains surround the bustling urban center, separating it from the Caribbean Sea by less than 10 miles on the northern coast of South America. While Tovar recalls childhood friends with grandparents who raised livestock outside the city, her family was not involved in agriculture.

When she was 8 years old, Tovar moved to the United States, to another coastal city: Miami, Fla. Like Caracas, Miami seems an unlikely place to find agriculture. But, Tovar says, it was her destiny.

When Tovar was in fifth grade, her counselor learned of her dream to become a veterinarian and printed her a list of high schools in Miami with programs that prepare students for careers in animal science. Top of the list was the William H. Turner Technical Arts High School, which offers a veterinary assisting program through its Academy of Veterinary Science and Agriculture Technology (VSAT). Through the program, high school students graduate with Certified Veterinary Assistant (CVA) and agribusiness certifications.

Three years later, when it was time to apply for high school, Tovar had already put in requests for a couple of schools when she remembered her conversations with the counselor. She and her mom searched old files for the paperwork, finding it just in time to make a last-minute request for Turner Tech.

"I got in, and it was one of the best decisions I've ever made," Tovar says.

Caring for Cattle

Turner Tech High School sits about 9 miles from downtown Miami, minutes from the beach. It's not

Typically, steers at Turner Tech are assigned to seniors with showing experience. But when Tovar asked Miller if she could work with and show one during her junior year, he simply said, "I'll think about it." A few weeks later, her name was posted on the list for steer projects.

exactly prime ranchland, but the school offers urban students the opportunity to connect with livestock and food production through its on-campus greenhouse and farm with cattle, hogs, chickens, goats, lambs, rabbits and guinea pigs. Each student becomes an FFA member and can earn the chance to exhibit school animals at the Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition.

Tovar immediately wanted to start working with the livestock, but before being assigned a market animal project, her FFA advisor, Everal Miller, told his students: "You have to earn my trust. I have to see that you're responsible."

She started staying after school as soon as she could, nearly every day of her freshman year.

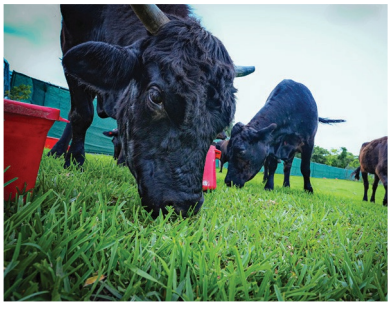
"What can I do to help?" Tovar asked Miller and the upperclassmen working with their market animals. She was ready to do whatever was needed.

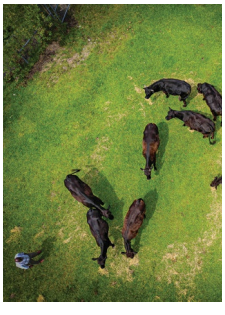
Miller gave her the responsibility of feeding goats and lambs. Every day, she would move the animals from their pens to a grazing area, feed them, clean their pens, then return them. She also "co-parented" a beef steer with an upperclassman, sparking her interest in cattle.

Typically, steers at Turner Tech are assigned to seniors with showing experience. But when Tovar asked Miller if she could work with and show one during her junior year, he simply said, "I'll think about it." A few weeks later, her name

This photo: Tovar has given unselfishly of her time and energy to the veterinary science and agriculture academy, according to Miami FFA advisor Everal Miller. "Her strong drive to succeed and enthusiastic attitude are admirable, and I know they will propel her to do great things," he says.

Opposite: Tovar moved to Miami from Caracas, Venezuela, with her family when she was 8 years old. Miami seems an unlikely place to find agriculture. But, Tovar says, it was her destiny.





was posted on the list for steer projects.

"It was probably the best feeling I've ever had," Tovar says.

Facing Challenges

At first, Tovar, who is 4 feet 11 inches tall, was a little scared to deal with the large animals.

"Having to deal with such big animals is a lot of work," Tovar says, "but I actually like it more [than working with small animals] because I feel like it disciplines you."

Having no personal experience with livestock, Tovar dove into research. She asked her teachers and classmates: "What are the best methods of working with these animals?"

With time, Tovar learned how to care for livestock in a challenging environment. Southern Florida's climate is tropical — hot, humid and susceptible to monsoons and hurricanes. She is careful to avoid overheating in the animals and can predict how they will react in different situations by observing their body posture.

"It takes time and lots of patience," Tovar says.

Her first steer, an Angus-Charolais cross, was "the sweetest," she says. Together, they won grand champion at the county fair in 2022. She gained a new steer with a more difficult temperament for her senior year. It took four months for her to be able to confidently touch that steer across its body, but the extra work paid off, she says. At market, the steer earned her $5 per pound, nearly double the previous year's steer.

"I think it's really cool to be able to raise these animals in such an amazing environment and then give

Tips for Talking About Animal Agriculture

Victoria Tovar lives in the most populous county in Florida. Of the 2.7 million people in Miami-Dade County, only about 20,000 are employed in agriculture. Even with less than 1% of the county involved in agriculture, the industry still contributes a whopping $2.7 billion in economic impact each year, according to the county's website.

Even though agriculture is essential for life, Tovar has found herself among the few in Miami who appreciate it. Animal agriculture—her passion—is especially misunderstood, she says.

"When people ask me what I do, usually their reaction is: 'That's cruel. How can you raise animals for meat?'" Tovar says.

Tovar does not allow people's judgments to bother her, nor does she judge those who don't understand agriculture. Instead, she shares her perspective calmly and respectfully.

She offers these words of advice to others who might find themselves faced by someone negative about agriculture.

- **KEEP A POSITIVE MINDSET.** Remember, everyone has a different way of thinking. Try to understand their point of view.
- **EDUCATE THEM.** Instead of criticizing their way of thinking, find shared values and build on them with your knowledge and personal experiences. Show people solutions to the problems they are raising. For example, if they are concerned about animal abuse, share how you handle your livestock and why.
- **DON'T LET THEM GET TO YOU.** In life, not everyone will like you or what you do. But if it's your passion and you know it is right, just keep going.
- **FIND STRENGTH IN THE AGRICULTURE COMMUNITY.** "I feel like the power we have together can influence more people around the world," Tovar says. "It's important to stick together and remember how important our job is to the world."

More from Miami

Watch our video and learn even more about Victoria Tovar's FFA experiences.

to the community by feeding the world," Tovar says.

For the Future

Tovar served as a Miami FFA Chapter officer for two years and, during her junior year of high school, she started organizing workshops to pass on lessons she had learned in the show barn. In a school where few come from families with livestock legacies, Tovar wanted to help create an environment in which everyone is welcome and equipped to succeed.

"Victoria has given unselfishly of her time and energy to the academy," says Miller, VSAT academy leader and Miami FFA advisor. "Her strong drive to succeed and enthusiastic attitude are admirable, and I know they will propel her to do great things."

Now in her first semester at Miami Dade College, Tovar is continuing to pursue her dream of becoming a veterinarian. Thanks to her FFA experiences, she wants to be a large-animal veterinarian and hopes to someday have a farm where urban students can go to learn about animal agriculture and show cattle.

"For me, it really was like this FFA jacket made me feel like I was where I belong," Tovar says. •

CHOOSE WISELY

USE THIS EXPERT ADVICE TO SELECT THE CDE OR LDE THAT'S BEST FOR YOU.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

Choosing from among the many career and leadership development events (CDEs and LDEs) can be challenging and sometimes overwhelming.

However, that doesn't have to be the case. Megan McGrady, manager of educational development at the National FFA Organization, says selecting your ideal event can be as simple as starting with your interests and career aspirations.

"If a student is interested in becoming a veterinarian or veterinary technician, for example, I would highly recommend they take part in the veterinary science CDE," she says. "They'll get valuable hands-on experience and potentially make industry connections that could serve them later in life."

McGrady also suggests FFA members examine their weaknesses and choose events that can help them build new skills and overcome fears that may have previously held them back.

"Many students are terrified of public speaking, and as a result, they struggle when it's time to give a presentation or speech in class," McGrady says. "The Creed speaking LDE is a great place for seventh- to ninth-grade members to start, especially when it comes to building confidence when speaking in front of an audience. From there, many students naturally progress to the prepared public speaking and extemporaneous public speaking LDEs. What was once fear-inducing becomes a fun experience."

SEEK GUIDANCE

Additionally, McGrady encourages members to ask their advisors for recommendations, either based on the member's talents, strengths and passions or what has been historically popular with chapter members.

"Some FFA chapters have deeply rooted traditions that members uphold over the years when it comes to these competitive events," McGrady says. "Even if the particular event doesn't interest you right off the bat, you may still want to consider participating; you never know what skills and knowledge you'll pick up along the way."

Regardless of their choice, McGrady says students will only gain from competing in CDEs or LDEs, and she urges everyone to get involved — at least once.

"Even if you don't think you'll pursue a career in agriculture, competing in CDEs and LDEs will likely benefit you for years to come," McGrady says. "Not only will you develop transferrable skills that will set you up for future success, but you'll also be a more informed and educated consumer. Take a leap of faith, get out of your comfort zone and give at least one event a try. You won't regret it. In fact, you'll be glad you did it."

To access additional resources to help you identify which CDE or LDE might be a good fit, visit **FFA.org/Participate/CDE-LDE.**

Consider selecting a CDE or LDE that aligns with your interests or career aspirations, in this case, the dairy cattle evaluation and management CDE.

Examine your weaknesses and choose events that can help you overcome fears.

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SET ON SCIENCE

HIGH SCHOOL FRESHMAN RYAN SQUIRES BELIEVES SCIENCE CAN CHANGE THE WORLD.

- By Jodi Helmer

Ryan Squires isn't afraid to get his hands dirty.

"Whenever I can run an experiment, I do," he says.

The up-and-coming scientist developed a fascination for science as a child when he used baking soda and vinegar to create chemical reactions. As his understanding of science expanded, so did his interest in testing new theories and developing solutions to global issues.

"It's great to know the science that's behind something, but in order to actually apply it, you have to be able to build something to test it," he says. "I'd like to be able to do both."

Squires, a freshman at North Scott High School in Eldridge, Iowa, might not be a traditional ag student but his agricultural education teacher, Jacob Hunter, believed his interests were a perfect fit for the North Scott Middle FFA Chapter.

"I believe that school-based agricultural education is the best vehicle for empowering our students to take on these great challenges that we have in front of us," Hunter says. "It's our FFA members that are going to be doing the work to help feed the world and fight climate change."

AWARD-WINNING RESEARCH

In 2022, Squires tested which types of rocks were best for carbon mineralization for his FFA Agriscience Fair project. He gathered five rock types and stored them in a pressure vessel filled with carbon dioxide; after 420 hours, he removed the rocks, weighed them and compared the changes in their mass to control rocks to determine which rock types had sequestered the most carbon dioxide.

"Climate change is happening and I wanted to look at ways we could combat it," he says. "[Carbon mineralization] was an unexplored phenomenon and testable…so I decided to focus on that vein of science and carbon sequestration."

The project won first place in the 2022 National FFA Agriscience Fair Environmental Services/ Natural Resource Systems event for individual members in grades seven and eight.

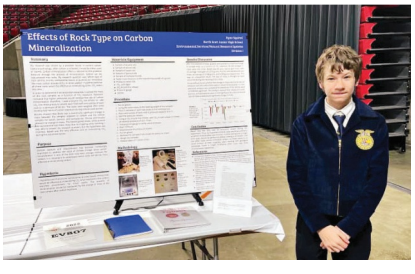
For his next big project, Squires wants to explore eco-friendly ways to launch rockets that will allow for continued space exploration with less impact on the environment.

Squires knows his experiments won't always be successful, but that's part of the learning process. He hopes other FFA members will take a similar approach to following their passions.

"Even a project that seems small and unimportant is a stepping stone," he says. "You may not be the one that gets the breakthrough, but someone else may look at your research and pick it up where you left off…and, together, we will eventually get to a conclusion that will help all of us."

Above: Ryan Squires (right) accepts his National Agriscience Fair award alongside advisor Jacob Hunter and 2021-22 Eastern Region Vice President Mallory White.

Below: Squires presents his research at the Iowa State FFA Convention.



A FAIR FIT?

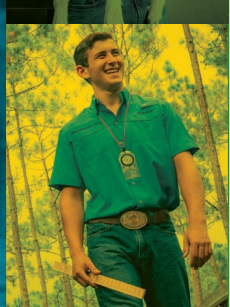
Are you interested in using scientific principles and emerging technologies to solve complex problems related to agriculture, food and natural resources? Then the National FFA Agriscience Fair might be a fit for you. Learn more at FFA.org/AgriscienceFair.

Photography: Copyright © FFA; courtesy of Jacob Hunter

95 YEARS OF FFA TRADITION

As our organization approaches its centennial, let's look back at a few monumental milestones, while keeping an eye on our future.

BY LAUREN QUINLAN



Even this magazine, *FFA New Horizons*, is a tradition. Launched as *The National Future Farmer* in 1952, it still exists to bring FFA members and supporters insightful and inspiring stories from around the organization.

FFA Official Dress "becomes a banner of excellence and a personal brand members can continue to cultivate," says former National FFA President Bre Holbert.

In 1928, our organization's founders — a group of young leaders — came together with a vision and purpose: to unify students, teachers and members of the farming community in support of agricultural education. To achieve this, they formed a group called the Future Farmers of America. We have evolved in the 95 years since (for one, we updated our name to the National FFA Organization in 1988 to better represent the diverse interests and opportunities of our membership), but our goal has remained the same: to prepare future generations for their paths in agriculture and beyond. In doing this, we hold fast to the traditions we've developed and celebrated in our near century of existence and to the many ways FFA members develop a sense of belonging to something very personal, yet much larger than themselves.

"Our traditions are meant to be passed on to future generations and communicate the values expressed within our FFA ceremonies, Creed and motto," says Dr. Larry Case, former national advisor, chief administrator and chairman of the National FFA Organization Board of Directors. "These are ultimately part of what makes our country strong and productive."

AS WE CELEBRATE A FEW NOTEWORTHY ANNIVERSARIES WITHIN FFA THIS YEAR, LET'S ALSO REFLECT ON THEIR HISTORY AND RECOGNIZE WHAT HAS MADE, AND ALWAYS WILL MAKE, THIS ORGANIZATION SPECIAL.

As we celebrate a few noteworthy anniversaries within FFA this year, let's also reflect on their history and recognize what has made, and always will make, this organization special.

Photography: IUPUI Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, copyright © FFA

90 Years of the FFA Jacket

Over the years, the iconic and memorable FFA jacket has shaped countless members' agricultural experiences. However, the jacket many know and love has humble beginnings tracing back to Fredericktown, Ohio.

In 1933, FFA advisor Gus Linter found a blue corduroy jacket hanging inside a local hardware store. Linter purchased the jacket, then connected with a supplier and had his chapter's name — Fredericktown FFA — stitched on the back in gold lettering.

During national convention the same year, Linter's chapter debuted the jackets. The design was so popular, it inspired delegates to vote and later approve the jackets as part of FFA members' official attire.

As time progressed, three versions of the jacket were developed. Each version included slight, yet noticeable changes. According to Dr. Gary Moore, professor emeritus of agricultural and human sciences at North Carolina State University, a few other youth organizations have emulated the FFA jacket, including the Vocational Industrial Clubs of America and the Future Homemakers of America members' red jackets as well as the 4-H green corduroy jackets.

"There's no telling how many FFA jackets are hanging in closets across the country, and former members revere their association with FFA," Moore says. "This is something we can be proud of. The jacket is an enduring icon and a silent testimony of the values associated with agricultural education and FFA."

In the early days, each jacket was hand-embroidered, says Lisa Barger, National FFA director of merchandise and membership services. The process of producing a jacket, which now takes an average of 1.6 yards of corduroy to create, has since become more mechanized.

"For many members, wearing the FFA jacket helps them feel like they are part of something bigger than themselves," Barger says. "They feel like part of their chapter and community as well as learn to appreciate the long-standing legacy behind FFA."

In 1964, the one-millionth FFA jacket was sold. Currently, more than 90,000 jackets are sold annually, Barger says. Through the Give the Gift of Blue program, FFA donors and supporters have also provided more than 16,000 jackets to members in need nationwide.

"The jacket holds so much history and tradition, but it's also the key to many members' futures," Barger adds. "Although it may seem like just an article of clothing to some, putting it on for the first time — and the experiences and accomplishments achieved while in it — can truly change lives."

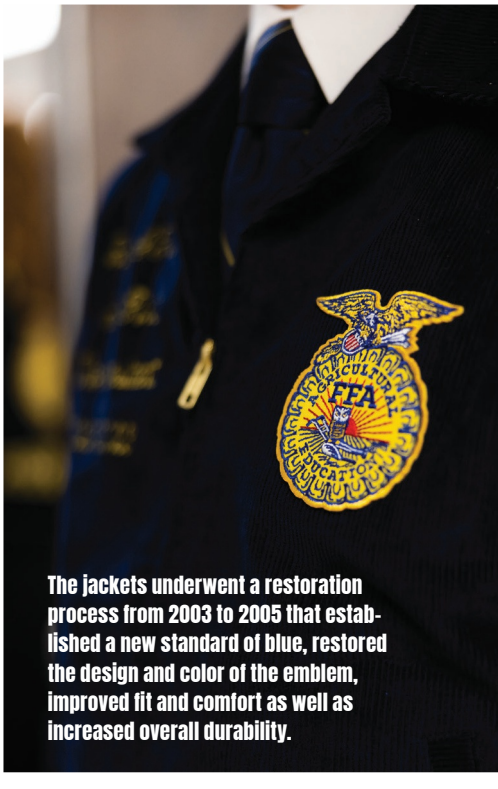
Left: The blue corduroy jacket dates to 1933, when FFA advisor Gus Linter (left, at a presentation 20 years later) had them stitched for members of his Ohio chapter. The jackets quickly gained popularity.

Top: Members of the Fredericktown FFA Chapter in Ohio were the first to wear blue corduroy jackets.

Bottom: Chrystal McDaniel of Evadale, Texas, poses with the 3 millionth FFA jacket.

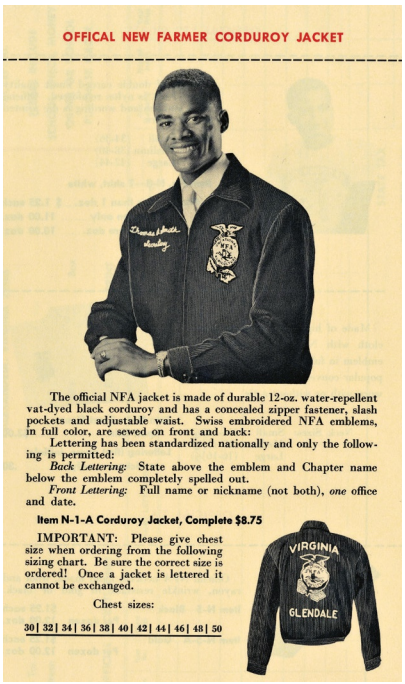
A seamstress machine-embroiders the back of an FFA jacket in 1960.

IN 1933, FFA ADVISOR GUS LINTER FOUND A BLUE CORDUROY JACKET HANGING INSIDE A LOCAL HARDWARE STORE. DURING NATIONAL CONVENTION THE SAME YEAR, LINTER'S CHAPTER DEBUTED THE JACKETS.



The jackets underwent a restoration process from 2003 to 2005 that established a new standard of blue, restored the design and color of the emblem, improved fit and comfort as well as increased overall durability.

Photography: IUPUI Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, Copyright © FFA



Clockwise from top left: National FFA marketed the first corduroy jackets with nifty brochures. Distinct jackets were also made for New Farmers of America members. National officers display today's Official Dress standards. Carol Wiehl of Arizona wears a white chapter sweetheart jacket in 1955.

Golden Anniversary of Official Dress

The first version of FFA Official Dress standards was created in 1973. Half a century later, these standards continue to instill a sense of unity as well as provide a recognizable image for FFA.

Before finalizing these standards, FFA experimented with a few different looks, according to Denise Rayman, digital archivist at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. These included an introduction of the first FFA uniform, which consisted of a military-style shirt, pants and hat.

Distinct jackets were also made for New Farmers of America members.

Before women were able to become FFA members in 1969, one way they could become involved was by being chosen as Chapter Sweetheart. After being selected by members, these females often represented an FFA chapter at events and other functions, Moore says, and wore rayon or corduroy

Photography: IUPUI Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, Copyright © FFA

custom white or sky-blue jackets.

Additionally, casual items, including official FFA-branded caps, jewelry, sports uniforms and other accessories, were developed and distributed over the years. A list of these, among others, with supplemental photographs can be accessed within the FFA Fashion Show online exhibit compiled by Rayman.

As time progressed and the scope of FFA expanded, additional changes to Official Dress standards were made. For example, in 1988, the wording within the emblem evolved from "Vocational Agriculture" to "Agricultural Education." The jackets also underwent a restoration process from 2003 to 2005 that established a new standard of blue, restored the design and color of the emblem, improved fit and comfort as well as increased overall durability.

In 2016, FFA delegates voted to make FFA Official Dress standards more inclusive. Members can now wear skirts or pants, as well as religious attire, while representing the organization. A full list of current FFA Official Dress guidelines is outlined within the National FFA Official Manual at FFA.org/Official-Manual.

"To me, the FFA uniform reminds us of where we have been, who has worn the jacket prior to us and how members today get to carry on the legacy of those before them," says Bre Holbert, former National FFA Organization president and current agriculture educator for the Sacramento-Florin FFA Chapter. "It also becomes a banner of excellence and personal brand members can continue to cultivate with the actions they perform while wearing it."

Shop FFA, the organization's official supply service, continues to outfit members nationwide. Visit ShopFFA.org to view and purchase current merchandise, including jackets, FFA Official Dress and more.

Past Meets Future

Although honoring the past is important, those in FFA also acknowledge the importance of looking to the future. In shaping the leaders of tomorrow, we aim to instill a hopeful future for all kinds of agriculturists who will wear the blue jacket — and FFA Official Dress — in the years to come.

"FFA members deserve a space where all can feel welcome and brought into FFA traditions," Holbert says. "These allow old and young to connect, but the newness of programming and resources for our local and state associations needs to continue to grow and change with our membership. All stakeholders, advisors, alumni, corporate sponsors and members should be supportive of this in order for our organization to sustain itself for another 100 years." •

Scan this code with your phone to view the FFA Fashion Show collection.

To learn more about FFA history and access a full timeline of events, visit FFA.org/FFA-History.

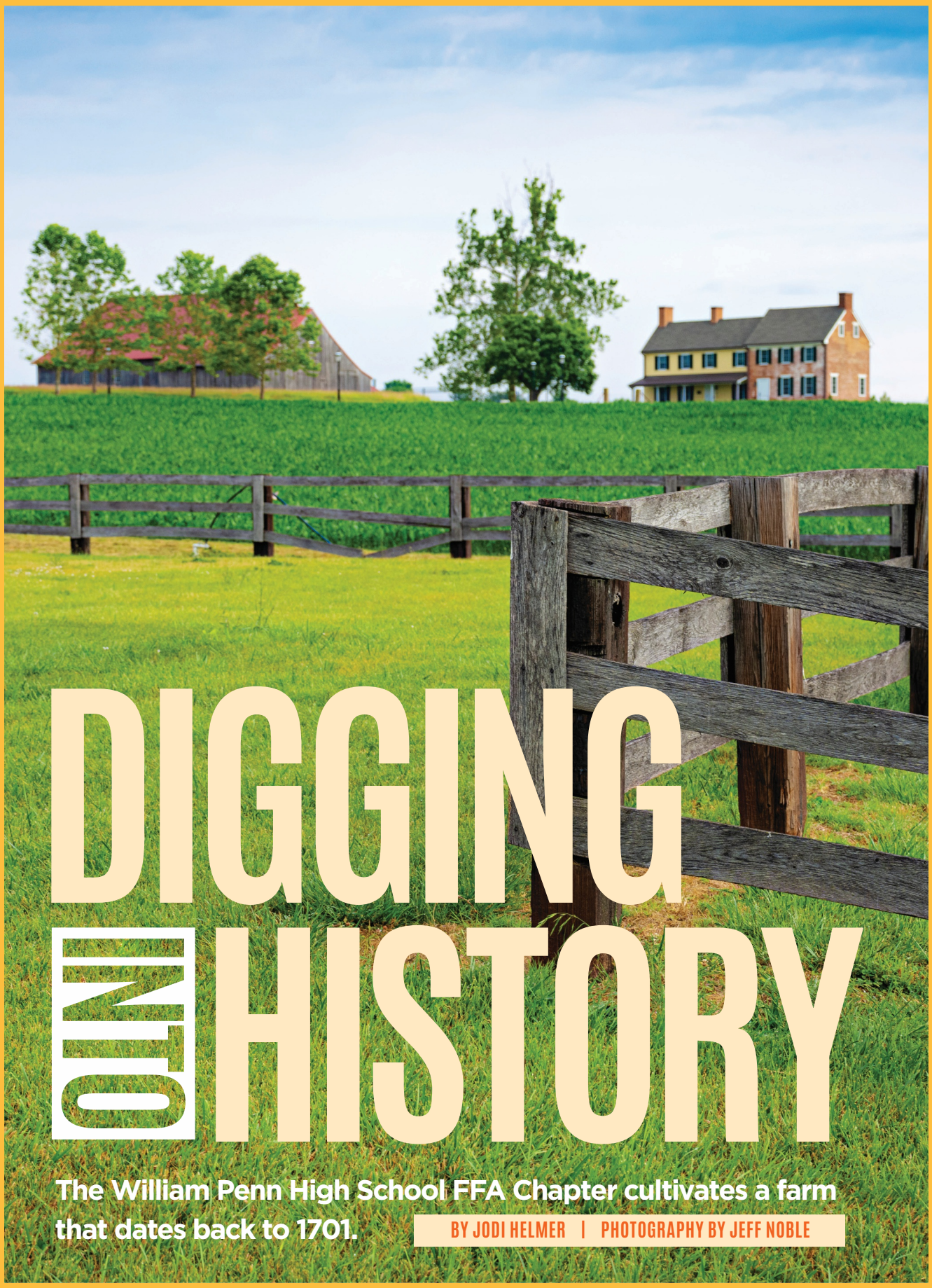
MOMENTOUS MEMBERSHIP

This year, we also take time to remember and honor those who helped shape the diverse membership now found within FFA. Join us in celebrating the following groundbreaking members.

Fifty years ago, Texan Fred McClure was elected as the 1973-74 National FFA secretary. McClure was the first Black national officer.

Twenty-five years ago, Jose Santiago was elected as the first national officer from Puerto Rico. Santiago served as the 1998-99 National FFA southern region vice president.

Twenty years ago, Javier Moreno was elected as the 2003-04 National FFA president. Moreno was the first Puerto Rican and person with a native language other than English to be elected as a national FFA president.



DIGGING INTO HISTORY

The William Penn High School FFA Chapter cultivates a farm that dates back to 1701.

BY JODI HELMER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF NOBLE

Makayla Counts was in middle school when she decided she wanted to be a farmer. There was just one problem: Counts didn't grow up on a farm and had no experience growing crops or raising animals. That changed when she enrolled at William Penn High School in Delaware's New Castle County.

"So many kids don't have the opportunity to work on a farm," Counts says. "Penn Farm has been really great because I've always loved animals, and I get to work with chickens and goats and ducks."

Counts is among the 300 students taking agriculture classes at William Penn High School. The FFA members help feed the goats and chickens, gather eggs, clean coops and stalls, grow fruits and vegetables, and cultivate ornamental plants on the adjacent historic farm.

TAKING A BITE OUT OF HISTORY

Historic Penn Farm has a storied history. In 1701, William Penn, founder of the Province of Pennsylvania, set aside more than 1,000 acres of land in New Castle, Del., for the benefit of local citizens.

The parcel, known as the New Castle Common, was later divided into tenant farms, where farmers grew corn and peaches and raised cattle, pigs and chickens. The 100-acre Penn Farm represents the last surviving farm of the original acres, which are managed by the Trustees of New Castle Common.

William Penn High School partnered with the trustees to lease land for its agricultural and culinary program. The "farm-to-school" program was introduced in 2003 to provide hands-on education in plant and animal science and to supply nutritious foods to students within the Colonial School District.

The fact that the farm is located in an urban school district where students don't have a lot of exposure to agriculture makes the program especially impactful, according to animal science teacher and FFA advisor Karen Ferrucci.

"A lot of these kids may never go outside, never touch a vegetable, never plant a flower, never feed a goat," she says. "They get to take a lot of ownership [of the farm] and they get to eat the fruits and vegetables and enjoy the spoils of their labor."

Grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm to School Grant Program and Specialty Crop Block Grant Program have helped offset the cost of operating the farm.

The school currently leases eight acres of farmland to grow vegetables and fruits, including a small orchard and berry bushes. An apiary and pollinator habitat are also tended. The campus farm also raises chickens and goats. In 2021, 17,168 pounds of produce were harvested on the farm and used to provide more than 141,000 meals through the district's summer meal program.

"We grew from just small plots of ground to what we are today," says Toby Hagerott, farm manager for Penn Farm and the Colonial School District. "We established a teaching garden and expanded our farm tours to include preschool, elementary school students and middle

This photo: Thomas Seay, William Penn High School FFA vice president, shows his pride and joy, a silver Phoenix hen called Mia.

Below: FFA members process produce grown on the school farm.

THE SCHOOL CURRENTLY LEASES EIGHT ACRES OF FARMLAND TO GROW VEGETABLES AND FRUITS, INCLUDING A SMALL ORCHARD AND BERRY BUSHES. AN APIARY AND POLLINATOR HABITAT ARE ALSO TENDED. THE CAMPUS FARM ALSO RAISES CHICKENS AND GOATS.

> "Students get to grow, cultivate and harvest foods that they get to use in culinary classes or they get to see it in the cafeteria."
>
> — Katie Hawkins

Providing others with healthy food and education is something Makayla Counts, past William Penn High School FFA president, is passionate about. She hopes to pursue a career in agriculture conservation.

school students ... and we've been expanding on what we're growing and how we're growing to serve the community and the school."

EMBRACING FARM-TO-TABLE

Students in plant science classes manage all aspects of production, from sowing seeds and transplanting to watering and harvesting.

The nutrition services department serves fresh produce and processes, freezes and vacuum seals additional fruits and vegetables to ensure the summer bounty can be featured on the district's menu throughout the year.

"Grown by Students, for Students" signs are featured in the cafeterias to educate students about where the food comes from. Seeing the signs posted is a source of pride for the FFA members who worked hard to get the food from farm to table.

"Agriculture is a hard sell to some of our students, but being a part of the growing process from start to finish gives kids a sense of accomplishment," says Katie Hawkins, plant science teacher and FFA advisor. "Students get to grow, cultivate and harvest foods that they get to use in culinary classes or they get to see it in the cafeteria. We stress the importance of growing these crops so that others in our community can have access to fresh locally grown produce."

For Counts, one of the biggest rewards of working on Penn Farm is knowing that 50% of the food is served to her fellow students.

"Giving back to my community is my main goal in life," she says. "I'm helping to feed kids who don't always get to have three meals a day; it's such a blessing that I'm able to do this."

The school also operates a community-supported agriculture (CSA) program, selling boxes of fresh produce to community members. It's been a popular program because there aren't

William Penn High School FFA members and advisors stop outside Penn Farm's historic barn, which originally housed dairy cattle.

This photo: Valeria Ortega-Damian and Joanna Gomez Rosas perform a health check on Red, a boer goat. Top right: Farm manager Toby Hagerott works at the school's apiary. Bottom right: Advisor Katie Hawkins poses with her prize-winning succulents. Below: Advisor Karen Ferrucci poses with a new farm addition, a Pygmy goat named Doe-nut.

"A lot of these kids may never go outside, never touch a vegetable, never plant a flower, never feed a goat. They get to take a lot of ownership [of the farm] and they get to eat the fruits and vegetables and enjoy the spoils of their labor." — Karen Ferrucci

many farms in New Castle.

In 2016, the CSA program had 30 members and grew to 70 members last season. The funds from the sale of CSA shares support minor operating costs for the farm and serve as a scholarship source for FFA student leadership events.

CULTIVATING CAREER READINESS

The Penn Farm program is part of a comprehensive career and college readiness curriculum at William Penn High School.

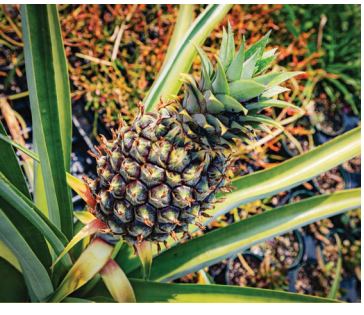
In addition to learning about plant and animal sciences, students have the option to pursue Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification and pesticide certification through the Delaware Department of Agriculture. The school also hires students for summer jobs through the county youth employment program.

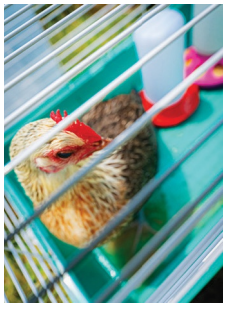
Thomas Seay, 16, has worked on Penn Farm for the past two summers.

"I wanted to get more experience in agriculture

This photo: Students tend the bees at the school's apiary with farm manager Toby Hagerott.

Below, left to right: Plants abound in the school's greenhouse. Students raise 60 laying hens that provide eggs for the cafeteria. Corn grows next to the high school's vegetable farm, providing a snapshot of what ag looks like in the state of Delaware. Penn Farm is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





and work with animals," he explains.

Seay has also gained experience with animals through animal science classes. He's doing a poultry project for his supervised agricultural experience. His silver Phoenix and Polish chickens and mallard and Pekin ducks have names and personalities — and Seay spoils them.

For his agriscience fair project, Seay is growing black soldier flies to feed to the flock for treats, and he hopes to show his poultry at the county fair.

Seeing students embracing opportunities to get their hands dirty and develop career skills is one of the biggest reasons Ferrucci loves the Penn Farm program.

"Agriculture programs are the underdogs in this area," she says. "By taking advantage of urban agriculture and the farm-to-fork movement, we were really able to gain a lot of momentum."

Penn Farm's original tenant house still stands and was recently updated to include offices for the city. The barn has been modified into an event space.

GROWING FUTURE LEADERS

The Penn Farm program isn't just focused on growing food and raising animals; the goal is also to grow future leaders.

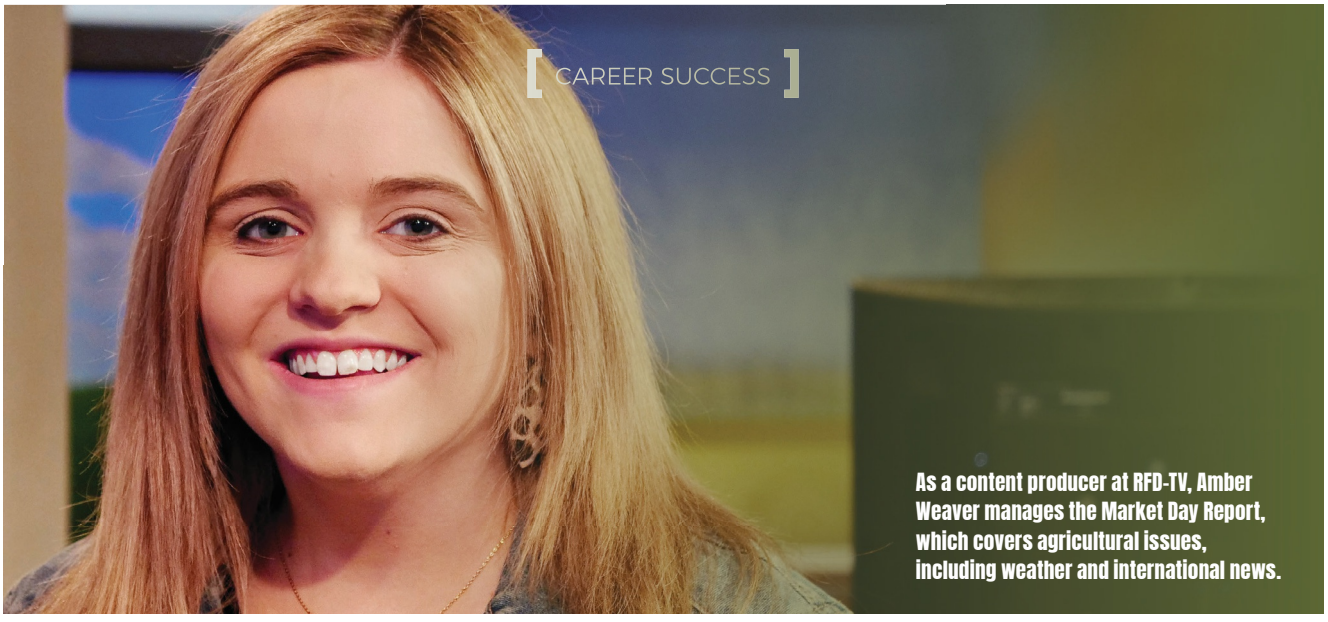
Seay credits FFA with building his knowledge and his confidence. He's the chapter secretary and a booster who encourages other students to take agricultural education classes and join the FFA chapter. It's a big departure for the self-described shy student who joined the program.

For Counts, a first-generation FFA member and the first African-American female chapter president, self-empowerment has been a big benefit of the program, but the future farmer and passionate environmentalist is also taking full advantage of the networking opportunities.

Counts connected with delegates from other chapters at the state and national FFA conventions and met Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester, the first woman and first African American to represent Delaware in Congress. Counts also secured a scholarship to study agriculture at University of Maryland Eastern Shore this fall.

"The congresswoman gave me that inspiration to realize that I could help my community in any way, shape or form," she explains. "The farm and FFA have been such life-changing experiences because now I can go out there confidently and speak about anything that I'm passionate about." •

> "The farm and FFA have been such life-changing experiences because now I can go out there confidently and speak about anything that I'm passionate about." — Makayla Counts



As a content producer at RFD-TV, Amber Weaver manages the Market Day Report, which covers agricultural issues, including weather and international news.

Taking Ag Issues to TV

AMBER WEAVER TURNED AN LDE INTO A REWARDING GIG AT RFD-TV.

– BY LAUREN DENTON

When Amber Weaver was a sophomore in high school, she wasn't sure about FFA. "I grew up in Nashville," she says, "but I did go to my grandparents' farm three times a week."

She enjoyed watching what went on at the farm, and that experience drew her to the agriculture program at McGavock High School, where she attempted two leadership development events (LDEs) that weren't a fit. "I didn't really care for food science because it was just a test, and I don't even like milk, so I didn't care about the dairy judging.

"But my advisor really wanted me to be involved in FFA, so she suggested the agricultural issues forum LDE," Weaver says. "She related it to show choir — almost like a play, but we're talking about an agricultural issue."

As it turns out, that was her place. "Ag issues was where I met a lot of my friends and had the most fun," says the two-time chapter president. "We placed at state every year. We were really passionate and competitive."

Six years later, she still presents ag issues every day.

"I never thought in high school how much I would do with FFA outside of high school. You never know where the organization is going to take you."

– Amber Weaver

FFA EXPERIENCES PAY OFF

From 6 a.m. to 2 p.m., Weaver works as a content producer at RFD-TV, a job she secured two weeks before she graduated from the University of Tennessee at Martin in 2021 with a degree in agricultural communications. She manages the 9 a.m. hour of the five-hour Market Day Report, which covers key agricultural issues, including weather and international news. Her job includes writing the content for the show, securing interviews, "calling the shots and making sure we're staying on time," she says.

"The research we did in [the ag issues LDE] and the people skills really prepared me for this job," Weaver says. "I learned a lot about the most hard-hitting issues for people in rural America. Ag issues showed me a lot about how to communicate with people in the farming community. I try to cover events that are going to affect farmers."

Ag issues also gave her connections "to contact people who could provide better perspective on the matter," she adds. "And you're also supposed to present ag issues in an entertaining way, and that's something you have to work toward in TV every day — not just factual information, but something people want to watch."

Weaver has also helped produce National FFA Convention & Expo coverage on RFD-TV. When she's off the clock, she helps her husband, an ag teacher at Dickson County High School in Tennessee, advise an ag issues LDE team that won first in the region — "a really cool full-circle moment," she says.

"I never thought in high school how much I would do with FFA outside of high school," Weaver says. "You never know where the organization is going to take you."

Find the best CDE and LDE for you at **FFA.org/Participate/CDE-LDE** and research related career options on AgExplorer at **AgExplorer.FFA.org.**

Photography: Courtesy of RFD-TV

LIVESTOCK LEADER

This FFA alumnus' journey took her from the show ring to a leadership role with the world's largest livestock show. – By Casyn Larman, *Mulhall-Orlando FFA vice president*

The Mulhall-Orlando FFA Chapter in Oklahoma has a proud tradition of successful alumni. This small rural community has produced state legislators, bank presidents, entrepreneurs and leaders across the spectrum of agriculture. One recent alumnus is making waves in the livestock industry due to her outstanding leadership.

Kass Newell currently works as the executive vice president of the Oklahoma Youth Expo livestock show, but her journey started on the family farm just outside the small town of Orlando, Okla. Her family has a strong agricultural background that led her to want to be in FFA more than anything. "I still remember the day I received my FFA jacket," she says. "I was so excited!"

Newell credits FFA for much of her success. "The lessons learned through FFA activities paved the way for me in many aspects of life and as a student. I learned leadership skills, networking, communication, respect, time management and so much more," she says. "Beyond the lessons learned, the friendships gained are irreplaceable. Most of the connections gained through FFA are still people I am associated with today."

Newell made the most of her time in FFA. She had multiple supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs) and competed in many activities at all levels. Through it all, she focused on areas of agriculture she was passionate about. "Without passion, the project wouldn't be as meaningful," she advises.

A FULL-CIRCLE EXPERIENCE

Some of Newell's fondest moments happened while showing her own livestock at the Oklahoma Youth Expo. Now she has come full circle, from a wide-eyed young girl walking down the ramp with her first heifer to being in charge of the show behind the scenes. One of her greatest joys is watching students succeed in the ring after working hard all year long. "Standing in the Grand Drive watching students reach their goals gives me goose bumps every single time," she says.

Her passion has seen her grow from a rural Oklahoma girl with a love for agriculture to a successful executive of the world's largest junior livestock show, setting an example for other FFA members to follow and pushing her to influence agriculture's future.

"Beyond the lessons learned, the friendships gained are irreplaceable. Most of the connections gained through FFA are still people I am associated with today." – Kass Newell

Kass Newell currently works as the executive vice president of the Oklahoma Youth Expo livestock show.

Photography: Courtesy of Kass Newell

ON THE RECORD: JIMMY DILLON

The past national officer says FFA can benefit every student, everywhere.

– By Jessica Mozo

“I always said FFA training would benefit any student. It’s the finest training, regardless of whether you are academically or athletically inclined.”

– JIMMY DILLON

Jimmy Dillon presented President Eisenhower with an honorary American Farmer Degree at the 1953 national FFA convention.

FFA alumnus Jimmy Dillon, 90, of Louisiana, served as national FFA president in 1952-53 and is one of the oldest living past national officers. We caught up with Dillon, who was born in 1932 during the Great Depression, to see what he’s up to now and how FFA impacted his life.

Q: How did you get involved in FFA?

A: When I was 14 and in the eighth grade, we moved to an 80-acre farm in Bonita, La. We did not have FFA or vocational agriculture in Wilmot, Ark., where I had gone to school for eight years, but they did have it at Bonita. I saw the opportunities FFA offered. I also participated in 4-H, showed livestock and entered contests for the county fair with beef cattle and swine.

Q: How did you work your way up to becoming a national FFA officer?

A: I always wanted to go to state FFA convention, and finally as a junior in high school I got to go. I became a delegate, and I ran for parliamentarian. I got elected, and that opened the opportunity to learn how the state organization worked. I got training in parliamentary procedure and public speaking, and that launched me to pursue FFA further.

The next year, I ran for state treasurer and was elected. I got to go to national convention as state treasurer. I thought becoming a national officer would be a dream come true. After serving as a state officer, I offered myself as a candidate for a national officer, and by the grace of God, I was elected national president.

Q: Do you have any favorite memories of your time as national president?

A: Being national president, I had the opportunity to go to the White House and invite President Eisenhower to come speak at our 25th anniversary convention. That was a great honor and a wonderful memory. I also enjoyed visiting our FFA donors with the national officer team.

Q: How do you spend your time now?

A: I’m retired from the Association of Farm Equipment Dealers, where I spent most of my career. I live on nine acres in Baton Rouge, and I have a pecan orchard. I have all kinds of projects I work on outside. I read magazines and newsletters, keep up with the stock market and read on the internet. I try to be physically, mentally, socially and religiously balanced.

Q: Why is FFA important and relevant for today’s youth?

A: I have dear friends who are retired physicians and attorneys who were in FFA. They all say the training they got in FFA launched their careers. I was so pleased when girls were allowed to participate because I always said FFA training would benefit any student. It’s the finest training, regardless of whether you are academically or athletically inclined.

Photography: IUPUI

FFA in the USA

FFA members are doing amazing things. Read on to learn how your fellow members are living out the FFA mission.

— Compiled by Julie Woodard

Alabama

In October, Alabama FFA members attend a joint leadership conference with other career and technical student organizations to develop their leadership skills and interact with other student leaders.

Alaska

Spooky ag! Silent Springs FFA will host a food insecurity haunted house from October through November. The haunted house will share the risks of food insecurity. While the house is meant to be a fun learning experience, the horrors are real, with 95% of Alaska's food being imported.

Arizona

Rio Rico FFA has been hard at work preparing its students to be educated leaders outside the classroom. Over the past year, students have earned more than 80 career certifications.

Arkansas

Cast a line in the name of FFA! Cabot FFA puts on a large-scale fishing tournament fundraiser on Greers Ferry Lake.

California

During September and October, freshmen from across the state will attend the Greenhand Leadership Conference, learning about the organization and future opportunities.

Delaware

In November, Appoquinimink FFA will raise awareness for National Diabetes Month with a "Blue Jackets Go Blue for Diabetes" campaign.

Florida

The Florida FFA Foundation established the Better Days Disaster Relief Fund to assist Florida chapters in recovering from catastrophic events such as hurricanes and other natural disasters.

Georgia

The Jackson Empower and Madison County FFA chapters traveled to Ireland over spring break, taking in the sights and sounds of international agriculture.

Idaho

Mackay FFA used the creativity of its students and advisor to design and construct a fully functioning fish lab in coordination with Idaho Fish and Game.

Illinois

At the state's FFA Ground Zero Conference, nearly 1,000 FFA members packaged hygiene kits that were donated to those in need.

Indiana

Indiana FFA hosted a benefit auction at the Fort Wayne Farm Show, raising over $20,000 for FFA members across the state.

Iowa

An all-female team of ag students at Nevada FFA built four tractors and an implement that was sold to raise money for their chapter.

Kansas

Each of the state's seven districts facilitates a day specifically for Greenhand members to learn about leadership and all that FFA offers.

Kentucky

Kentucky FFA interacted with thousands of citizens as part of Ag Land at the Kentucky State Fair. Members shared student projects, including crops, horticulture and mechanics exhibits, while highlighting the state's stars, premier chapters and history of FFA.

Maryland

Boonsboro FFA spreads holiday cheer by donating essential items (300+ items were collected in 2022) and "graduation baskets" to Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused (CASA) during the chapter's holiday open house in December.

Massachusetts

Essex FFA organizes an annual cider stand at the Topsfield Fair to raise money during the fall.

Michigan

Fremont FFA members compete to write the best lesson plan about agriculture, and the winner gets to give the lesson to all local fifth graders on Animal Science Day.

Minnesota

FFA members, veterinarians and veterinary students volunteer at the state fair in the CHS Miracle of Birth Center. Members share with fairgoers about agriculture while livestock is born on site.

Missouri

Students from across the state gather each August for the Missouri Farmers Care Drive to Feed Kids, working to eliminate food insecurity. Last year, more than 700 students packaged 160,000 meals in a single day.

Nebraska

In November, Nebraska FFA put on a Pathways to Careers Conference. Students connected with industry professionals who facilitated workshops about agricultural lobbying, entrepreneurship, ag mechanics, veterinary medicine and more.

Nevada

Wells FFA spends every winter preparing for an annual tree festival. Members decorate and donate a live Christmas tree to the silent auction, and the auction winner takes home a beautiful tree. The tree is eventually planted around Wells, and all the proceeds go to the local Family Resource Center.

New Hampshire

This season welcomes the newly completed FFA Barn at the Deerfield

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

Illustrations: Getty Images, Zoonar, Brian Hagiwara,

Fairgrounds. Volunteers built the facility to showcase FFA in the Granite State.

New Jersey

In October, the Penns Grove, Salem Tech and Woodstown FFA chapters come together to host Ag Day for eighth graders from various schools in Salem County. Participants rotate through stations that promote agricultural careers. The program piques the interest of these students and encourages them to consider ag education.

New York

This fall and winter, chapter officers will plan and execute activities or events that accomplish a themed task. Themes include Back to Belonging, Grow SAEs, Celebrate & Support the Harvest, Connect Intentionally with Our Communities and Grow Their Own Leadership — Locally.

North Carolina

Agricultural mechanics students at West Rowan High School in Mount Ulla restored a 1967 John Deere 4020 diesel tractor. It will be raffled off with proceeds to benefit their chapter.

North Dakota

Chapters competed in a statewide book drive titled Battle of the Books to gather children's books about agriculture, which were donated to little lending libraries across the state.

Ohio

Ridgemont FFA wanted to broaden students' knowledge of agriculture commodities across the country, so they created Commodity Christmas, a map of the United States highlighting agriculture in every state.

Virginia

Pulaski County FFA partnered with the seven schools in its county to deliver over **3,000** pounds of local beef to each school's cafeteria for use in students' meals.

Oklahoma

Chickasha FFA completes several service projects every year to support its community. Members worked together this past Thanksgiving to make blankets for students in their school who are homeless.

Oregon

Oregon has some incredible educators. For teacher appreciation week, the state officer team published a survey to give students a chance to express their gratitude. With a record amount of responses, 25 advisors were recognized on the state FFA Instagram.

Pennsylvania

Each January, the state hosts the Mid-Winter FFA Convention during the annual Pennsylvania Farm Show, where new members can receive their first FFA jacket and others receive their Keystone (state) Degree. More than 8,000 FFA members attend.

South Dakota

During the state's legislative session, members and legislators converse over breakfast about the future of the state's ag industry. Breakfast consists of farm products provided by FFA members' SAEs.

Tennessee

Brighton FFA hosts a Barnyard Buddies Camp where members teach students from pre-K to fourth grade about agriculture and advocacy.

Texas

Florence FFA is bringing awareness to mental health in its rural community by implementing a Kindness Path to provide locals with a place for peace.

U.S. Virgin Islands

Eulalie R. Rivera FFA raised native St. Croix white sheep and hosted farm visits for other schools on the island. The tropical breed is parasite-resistant and reared for meat production.

Utah

The state officer team learned about the amazing things FFA members do at Granite Technical Institute. Their takeaway: Never underestimate any FFA member.

West Virginia

FFA members from across the state came together at a state leadership conference to make knot blankets for patients in a local children's hospital. A whopping 172 patients received blankets.

Wisconsin

Over three weeks, the state officer team enjoys traveling around the state to facilitate fall leadership workshops and participate in various industry tours.

Wyoming

First-year FFA members from across the state get fired up about FFA through workshops and group activities, sparking inspiration and lifelong connections.

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

MEDIA CENTER

ARTS & CULTURE IN AGRICULTURE

– By Jessica Wesson

INSTAGRAM

Need a pick-me-up during gray winter days? These farmers and gardeners on Instagram bring the brightness.

Big City Gardener
@bigcitygardener

Timothy Hammond's goal is to showcase minorities involved in urban gardening, educate the public, and make gardening approachable and fun. Check out his online blog: bigcitygardener.com.

Finch + Folly
@finchandfolly

Maine-based Allison Vallin Kostovick gives natural-living tips, seasonal gardening advice, and beautiful garden and landscape photography.

Black Girls With Gardens
@blackgirlswithgardens

This collective is dedicated to elevating women of color in gardening. It's also full of tips and tricks for the newbie to the established pro.

Humans Who Grow Food
@humanswhogrowfood

This inspiring account shares glimpses of people across the globe who have a shared passion for cultivating crops, feeding their families and caring for the land.

Sankofa Farms
@sankofafarms

Kamal Bell created Sankofa Farms to provide a sustainable food source for minorities living in rural and urban areas in North Carolina. Follow along to see how Sankofa Farms feeds those in need.

VIDEO SERIES

The Cowgirl Channel

Tune in to the first television network centered on women in Western sports.

As women's Western sports grew in popularity, Rural Media Group, the parent company of RFD-TV, launched a special platform to bring these events to television. The Cowgirl Channel airs a number of shows, such as *All American Cowgirl Chicks,* which gives an inside look into the lives of a female equestrian drill team; *FarmHer* and *RanchHer,* which share the stories of women who are paving the way in agriculture; and *Rodeo Queens* and *Grit and Grace,* which showcase Western fashion or rodeo royalty. The channel also covers a Women's Professional Rodeo Association event each week.

TIKTOK

Back Road Cowgirls

THESE TWO COWGIRLS HIT THE ROAD TO FIND – AND TELL – THE UNIQUE STORIES IN AGRICULTURE.

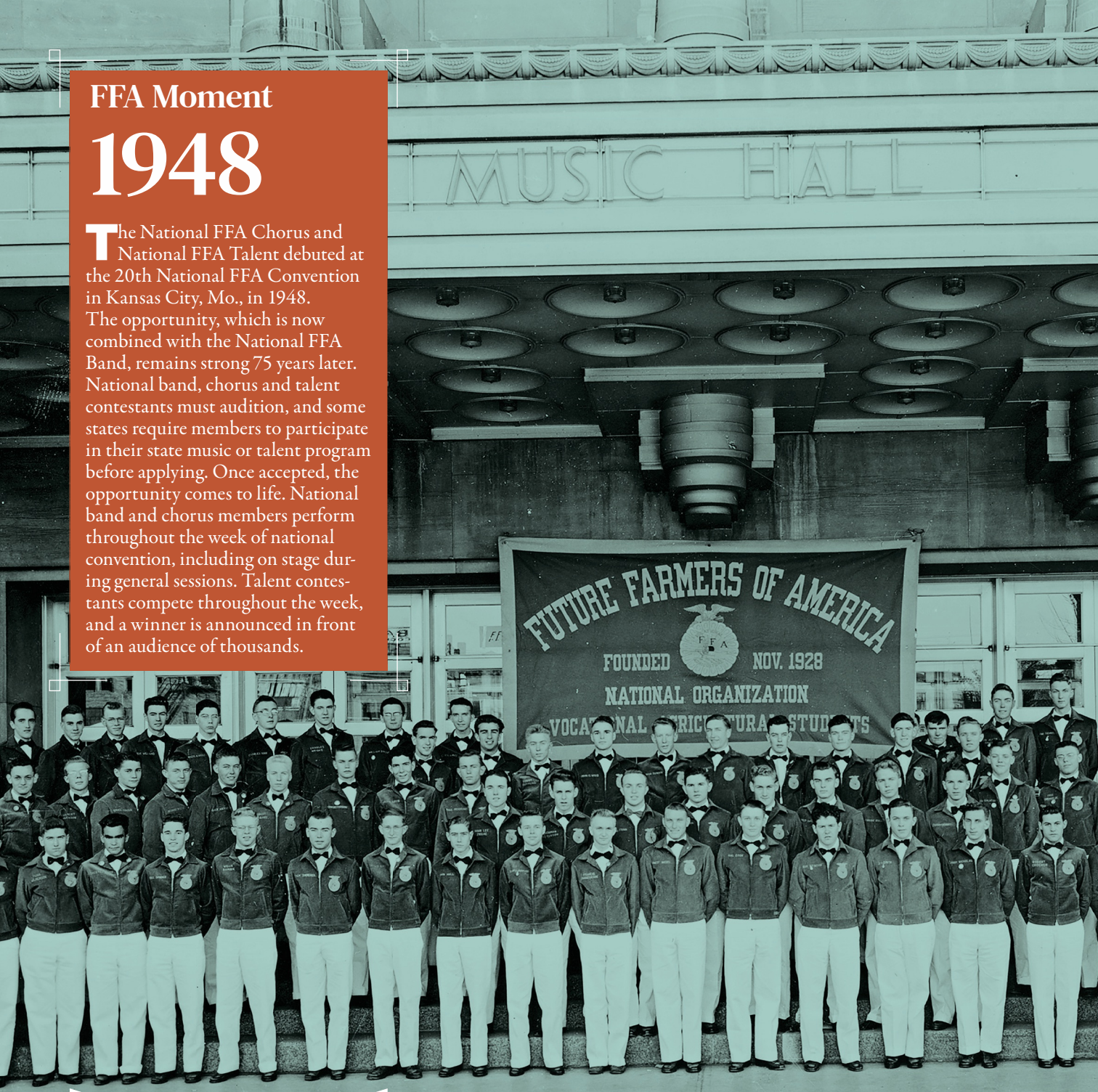
Courtenay DeHoff and Kiah Twisselman Burchett have deep passions for agriculture, and they love telling the stories of the people behind it. After meeting at an airport, the two created *Backroad Cowgirls* to showcase how farming and ranching connect communities. They loaded up a Volkswagen van and hit the road in search of stories. The premier season is available now on YouTube and at backroadcowgirls.com. It features a cattle rancher, a restaurateur, a vegetable farmer and more.

Photography: RFD-TV

FFA Moment

1948

The National FFA Chorus and National FFA Talent debuted at the 20th National FFA Convention in Kansas City, Mo., in 1948. The opportunity, which is now combined with the National FFA Band, remains strong 75 years later. National band, chorus and talent contestants must audition, and some states require members to participate in their state music or talent program before applying. Once accepted, the opportunity comes to life. National band and chorus members perform throughout the week of national convention, including on stage during general sessions. Talent contestants compete throughout the week, and a winner is announced in front of an audience of thousands.



SUPPORTING OUR SOUND

Thank you, Corteva Agriscience, for your pioneering support of the National FFA Band and Chorus since 2008.

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