



NEW

Fall/Winter 2025

HORIZONS

FFA.ORG



Sweet Success

Milton Hershey FFA Members Carry on Traditions and Grow Their Own

3

National
Convention
Must-Sees

+ Grab New Gear

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THIS COULD LIGHT-BULB



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THE LEADERSHIP LEGACY



To appreciate where you're headed, it can be helpful to reflect on where you've been. A lot has changed in the nearly 100 years since the Future Farmers of America (now known as the National FFA Organization) was established, but one thing remains the same: FFA is committed to "growing the next generation of leaders who will change the world."

This issue shines a light on several major milestones in our organization's history. "Leading the Change" on page 8 details how Mary Rickert advocated for female membership in California and how her granddaughters continue to carry on her family's FFA traditions. "Centennial Celebration" on page 38, on the other hand, describes the vision of four educators who helped form the Future Farmers of Virginia.

Furthermore, the "FFA Moment" on page 43 recognizes 95 years of the FFA Creed — a series of statements that summarize the values and beliefs of FFA members, advisors, alumni and supporters nationwide. "Dress for Success" on page 9 shares several reminders for when you represent FFA at functions and events like the 98th National FFA Convention & Expo, scheduled for later this year.

Today, FFA instills leadership skills through activities and opportunities offered at the local level. On page

39, "Feeding the Farmers" showcases the Riverside FFA Chapter's student-led event that provides harvest meals to its Nebraska community members. Additional ideas for your chapter's Program of Activities, which were submitted by 2024-25 FFA in the USA reporters, can be found in "FFA Region Round Up," starting on page 30.

From my perspective, something special happens when a group of people come together for a shared purpose. When I joined FFA as a high school freshman in Missouri, I remember feeling like I became part of something bigger than myself (because I did). I still get goose bumps when I stand on the national convention arena floor or attend a state convention and listen to FFA officers recite their parts of Opening Ceremonies.

Whether being in FFA is a time-honored tradition or you're one of the first in your family or community to wear the blue corduroy jacket, you play an important role in our organization. After all, you're part of the more than 1 million past, present and future leaders who will ensure FFA continues to evolve while staying true to its roots.

Lauren Quinlan

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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.

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.

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

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Milton Hershey School provides one-of-a-kind student experiences in agriculture.

THE FEED

5 Things FROM FFA.ORG

As you make plans for the future, save these resources to make it a semester, school year and convention to remember.

98th National FFA Convention & Expo



Four days of celebration and networking are on the horizon. Maximize your time by reviewing the A-to-Z Guide, detailed event schedules, floor plans and frequently asked questions. You can also sign up for an e-newsletter that features important updates and browse highlights from last year's event to generate excitement about what's to come.

FFA Live!



Featuring a brand-new format, this streaming broadcast will provide an up-close look at what's happening throughout the week in Indianapolis. Tune in to receive an all-access pass to general sessions, finals presentations and exclusive interviews with speakers, award winners, attendees and special guests. You can also follow the National FFA Organization on social media and check FFA.org periodically for the latest news and happenings.

Scan with your phone

FFA Scholarships

It's never too early to start thinking about your next step. Starting Nov. 1, submit a single online application that can qualify you for multiple National FFA Scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$10,000. From there, you can reapply and be reconsidered for financial assistance each year until you reach a college junior status.



Official Manual

Your go-to guide for all things FFA. As you flip through these pages, quiz yourself (and others!) on history and traditions, refresh your memory about how our organization functions and discover ways to deepen your involvement. You can also purchase a printed copy on ShopFFA.org.



Culver's Virtual Field Trip

Ever wondered how a scoop of fresh frozen custard makes its way from the dairy farm to the freezer? If so, check out this interactive activity offered through AgExplorer. Discover career pathways related to food science as you meet Culver's team members and learn about processes ranging from production and processing to product development, quality assurance, distribution, marketing, and more.



FFA

AT-A-GLANCE

Between conferences, events, service projects and more, there's something in store for everyone this time of year. Save these important dates so you don't miss out on any of the action.

**First of each month || Day of Service
Mini-Grant application deadline**

**Aug. 15 || Next Gen Conferences
applications open**

**Aug. 29 || Fall Semester-Long Living to
Serve Grant application deadline**

**Sept. 1 || Alumni and Supporters online
grant application deadline**

Oct. 1 || SAE Grant application opens

**Oct. 8 || Standard National FFA Convention
registration begins at 8 p.m. ET**

**Oct. 29-Nov. 1 || 98th National FFA Convention
& Expo in Indianapolis**

**Nov. 1 || National FFA Scholarships
application opens**

Nov. 15 || SAE Grant application deadline

**Dec. 2 || Spring Semester-Long Living to Serve
Grant application opens**

Dec. 15 || New Century Farmer application opens

**Dates subject to change. Check FFA.org frequently for the latest information.*

Go Far With an SAE Grant

Allie Paschall identified a need in her community then used funding to create interactive educational resources. – By Katie Navarra Bradley

Through “Allie’s Ag Academy,” an agricultural education-focused Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), Hollow Rock-Bruceton FFA member Allie Paschall has provided more than 350 youth with more than 104 hours of hands-on instruction in Bruceton, Tenn. Her project, which began as teaching a summer school class about the dairy industry, evolved into a mobile agriculture learning lab, thanks to a National FFA SAE Grant.

Sponsored by Farm Credit, the grant enabled Paschall to assemble kits for teachers in her community and surrounding counties. Seven interactive tubs are packed with learning materials about livestock, plant and soil sciences, and sustainable agriculture practices.

“I realized teachers didn’t have [activities] they could check out and use when testing was done, and they didn’t have a specific topic to teach about,” Paschall says. “I wanted to provide that as well as promote agricultural advocacy and literacy.”

Paschall’s FFA advisor, Michael Stanford, says including well-defined goals and describing how the project could affect the community were key components that helped her SAE grant application stand out.

“I made sure it wasn’t something that had been done before,” Paschall adds. “I also researched different prices and made sure the kits were easily accessible for teachers.”

Above all, the main goal of Allie’s Ag Academy is to create interest in agriculture. “I want to get younger kids involved, so we can keep them coming back to learn more about it,” she adds.



Allie Paschall's (right) SAE includes helping elementary students explore agriculture through hands-on experiences.

GEAR UP

Every great application starts with identifying opportunities and articulating needs. From there, the possibilities are endless. Scan this code to learn more about the National FFA SAE Grant program and start your application.



LEADING THE CHANGE

**AS A CALIFORNIA TEEN,
MARY RICKERT ADVOCATED
FOR FEMALE FFA MEMBERSHIP
AND PAVED THE WAY
FOR TODAY'S LEADERS.**

— By Betty Haynes

In the late 1960s, Mary Rickert watched anxiously from the sidelines as her older brothers participated in FFA events. Her family's blue-and-gold roots began with the organization's inception, as her grandfather started the California FFA Association and her father worked as regional supervisor for vocational education.

Although Rickert took agriculture classes, was raised on a farm and was eager to join FFA, there was one problem: It was an all-male organization.

So, Rickert and seven young women made the case for female membership at the 1969 California State FFA Convention, and were soon voted in as members. That same year, the National FFA Organization also approved female membership.

"It was a real turning point," Rickert says. "It was finally time for us to hone in our leadership skills and develop ourselves."

California FFA State Advisor Charles Parker agrees, adding that women added a level of competition. The first year Rickert was allowed to compete, for example, she earned the high individual award in dairy cattle judging at state finals.

"Change is historically difficult, no matter how right it is to change," says Parker, who has been involved in FFA since 1971. "But it was a long time coming."

Moving Forward

More than 50 years later, Rickert and her husband, Jim, ranch near Redding, Calif. She's served on volunteer boards, founded an education foundation and was appointed to the California State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. Rickert credits her FFA involvement with developing the skills and confidence necessary to advocate for agriculture and give back to her community.

"FFA provides the foundation for maturity, public speaking skills and leadership to hit the ground running as a young person," she says.



One of the ways Mary Rickert stays involved in agriculture is running a ranch with her husband, Jim.

Rickert and her livestock project were featured in a 1968 issue of *The Sacramento Bee*.



Today, Rickert's granddaughters proudly sport FFA jackets. "When they put them on, it takes my breath away," she adds. "It's rewarding to know they'll be able to reap the benefits of such an incredible organization."

INVESTING IN OTHERS

The National FFA Organization's Impact FFA: Women Growing Women initiative was launched in 2009 to raise funds to support female FFA members who wish to become ag teachers. Since then, it's evolved and includes an expanding network between FFA members and women working in agriculture.

"Impact FFA is working to create pathways for the young women excelling in the classroom to continue their talents into a career," says Kimberly Coveney, National FFA Foundation senior manager of individual giving.

Want to make a difference in others' lives? Scan this code to learn more, then email mentoring@ffa.org or visit ForeverBlueNetwork.org to create an account and join the Impact FFA group.



Female Membership

SETTING AN EXAMPLE

Rickert is one of countless women who paved the way for change. Scan these codes to dive deeper into the path of granting female FFA membership (left) — and the people who helped make it happen (right).



50 Years of Women in FFA

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

Whether it's your first or last year in FFA, gear up to wear Official Dress in style.

— By Taleen Hanna

Each time you zip up your blue corduroy jacket, you represent not only your chapter and state, but also the National FFA Organization. So, it's important to put your best look forward. Use these tips and reminders to dress your best — and help others do so, too.

THE BASICS

Full Official Dress includes the following:

- An official FFA jacket zipped to the top
- A white collared blouse or shirt
- An official FFA tie or scarf
- Black slacks and black socks/nylons or a black skirt and black nylons
- Black dress shoes with closed heels and toes

GET RID — OF — WRINKLES

When you're traveling, pack a travel-size steamer or hang your clothes in the bathroom while running the shower. Your collared shirt or blouse, slacks or skirt will be wrinkle-free in no time!

PLACING PINS

You may have honors you wish to display on your jacket. When doing so, remember to place them on the front, right-hand side and follow the rule of three:

1. Highest degree earned
2. Highest office held
3. Highest award earned

On the inside of your jacket, placing a small piece of cardboard between the pin and its clasp can prevent it from turning upside down.

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

There are opportunities to showcase your personal style while remaining professional. For example, get your jacket embroidered with

your name on the side opposite of the emblem.

You could also keep personal mementos like collectable pins, notes or friendship bracelets in the inside pockets of your jacket.



PERFECT PANTYHOSE

Spray your nylons with hair spray to prevent rips, or use clear nail polish to keep small ones from growing. It's also helpful to keep an extra pair (or a few) in your bag or jacket pocket just in case.

THE CORDUROY CREW

It's more than a jacket; it's an invitation to grow your skills and leadership potential. Scan these codes to shop for an FFA jacket of your own (left) or pay it forward to someone in need through the Give the Gift of Blue program sponsored by Bayer, Perdue, Tractor Supply Co., Corteva Agriscience, Lacrosse and Firestone Ag (right).



ShopFFA



Give the Gift of Blue

Quiz:

Career and Leadership Development Events

– By Jessica Mozo

Can you identify these National FFA competitions? Regardless of your interests, they can help you develop critical thinking and decision-making skills while having fun and making friends.

1. In the _____, teams demonstrate their ability to work with small and large animals through a written exam, scenario questions, identifications and hands-on practicums.
2. Competitors in the _____ are required to design a new product (or reformulate an existing one) as well as complete a safety and sanitation activity.
3. The _____ challenges competitors to think on their feet by giving a speech and answering questions with very limited time to prepare.
4. _____ competitors apply skills needed to advocate for agriculture and tell the FFA story using social media, magazine layouts, videos and more.
5. Competitors get a head start on their future careers in the _____ by submitting a resume, participating in interviews and negotiating a job offer.

ANSWER OPTIONS:

1. Agricultural Communications CDE
2. Employment Skills LDE
3. Extemporaneous Public Speaking LDE
4. Food Science and Technology CDE
5. Veterinary Science CDE

Answers:
1. Veterinary Science CDE, 2. Food Science and Technology CDE, 3. Extemporaneous Public Speaking LDE, 4. Agricultural Communications CDE, 5. Employment Skills LDE



CUE THE COMPETITION

Scan this code to access a full list of National FFA competitive events and find one that speaks to you. A full list of National FFA competitive event sponsors can also be found on [FFA.org](https://www.ffa.org).

Convention Must-Sees

Jot down these ideas to ensure a fun-filled week. – By Taleen Hanna

Preparations are in full swing for the 98th National FFA Convention & Expo, which is scheduled for Oct. 29–Nov. 1, 2025. If you're traveling to Indianapolis or tuning in from home, take advantage of all this event has to offer by planning ahead.

1. Shop and Explore.

Have some downtime to fill between activities? Grab a few friends and swing by the Indiana Convention Center. The Expo Hall and ShopFFA Mega Store feature the latest FFA merchandise, college and career representatives, Culver's custard, agricultural innovations, dance parties, and more. One thing's for certain — you won't leave empty-handed!

2. Focus on Service.

There are countless opportunities to embody the FFA motto of "Living to Serve." Register for one of the National Days of Service held in Indianapolis, or squeeze in some time to participate in on-site opportunities offered in the Expo Hall. If you're feeling creative, organize a project of your own, then tag @NationalFFA to share what your chapter and fellow members are up to.

3. Show Your Spirit.

Leading up to convention, purchase one of the official annual T-shirts or convention T-shirts available on ShopFFA.org. Throughout the week, remember to take lots of pictures and videos, and make plans to tune in to FFA Live! for broadcasts of each general session as well as interviews with FFA members, alumni and special guests.



Anticipation Is Building

As you count down to October, scan this code to access important updates such as speaker announcements, floor plans, schedules and more. Make sure to download the mobile app, too.



As you mingle with convention attendees, remember to capture new memories and find ways to stay in touch.

Question & Answer

**You've covered thousands of miles during your year of service.
What's something you can't hit the road without?**



Thaddeus Bergschneider
NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT

A book! Every night when I was a kid, my mom and dad read to me. I like to think my reading level has improved since then, but in a way I'm still the same 5-year-old Thad who could disappear into a good story. Since I can't lug my personal library with me on trips, I end up hunting for books wherever I'm traveling. No book lasts too long when I'm interested in it, and I'm always looking for new recommendations and favorites.



Luke Jennings
NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY

Everywhere I've traveled, I've made sure to pack my **disposable camera**. Our phones give us endless opportunities to make sure everything is how we want it to capture the "perfect" moment. However, there isn't an opportunity to retake pictures with only 30 exposures available. My camera teaches me to enjoy each moment a little more because it will never happen again. This year was full of once-in-a-lifetime experiences, so I tried to live everywhere I went one snapshot at a time.



Mary Schrieber
CENTRAL REGION VICE PRESIDENT

To make sure I always look sharp, I never forget my "**Official Dress emergency kit**." My advisors always carried a massive tote filled with supplies, and it saved me more times than I can count. Lint rollers, a portable steamer, hairspray, an extra American FFA Degree chain, safety pins, plenty of extra nylons and shoe shine are some of the first items I pack in my suitcase. When we feel confident and prepared, I think we show up with our best energy and intentions.



Caroline Groth
EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

When I interviewed for national office, I began daily journaling as a way to reflect and stay grounded. What started as a simple habit has grown into a meaningful ritual. My **journal** is a space for reflection, creativity and gratitude. It's filled with words, but also photos, sticky notes from workshops, old boarding passes, ticket stubs and even napkins with quick notes scribbled on them. It's a scrapbook of moments, conversations and connections that reminds me of where I've been, who I've met and what I've learned.



Abigale Jacobsen
WESTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I often find myself with long stretches of alone time between events, which are usually spent in hotel rooms, airports and rental cars. My **AirPods** help me fill the silence with connection and comfort. There's nothing quite as refreshing as an end-of-day debrief with my best friends or a lengthy FaceTime call with my whole family (pets included!). When I'm not on the phone, music helps replace the quiet solo travel with something familiar and gives me the space to reset and recharge.



Jack Lingenfelter
SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

For my birthday, my teammates gave me a small **digital picture frame** compact enough to fit in my backpack and powered by a few simple batteries. At every convention, and in every hotel room, I power it on and let the slideshow begin. Faces of friends, family and teammates fill the screen, reminding me of the people who believe in me. It serves as a powerful reminder of how I'm never alone and my community is always guiding me, lifting me up and helping me lead with heart.

AG 101

Wat

- By Mark Moore

Water plays an important role in our daily lives and agriculture. From raising livestock to growing crops to fueling hydroponics systems to cleaning and protecting produce and more, water affects the food we eat in more ways than one. Consider these stats — and opportunities for your future.

212,714

Total irrigating farms
(applying water to crops
using human-created
systems) in the U.S.

8.1%

Decrease in the number of
U.S. farms that irrigated
between 2018 and 2023.

**53.1
million**

Total irrigated acres
in the U.S.

2.8%

Decrease in the total amount of
irrigated water applied by U.S.
farms between 2018 and 2023.

Top five states with the greatest number of irrigated acres.



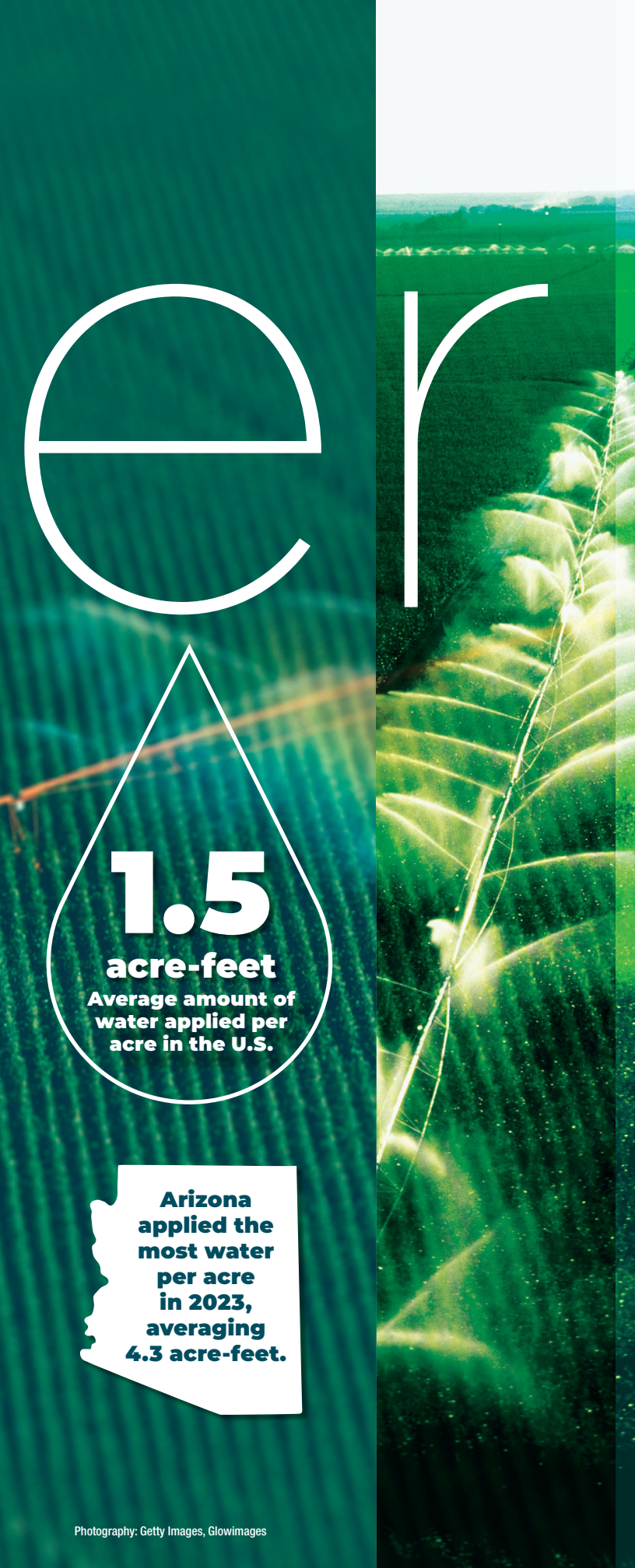
CALIFORNIA

NEBRASKA

ARKANSAS

TEXAS

IDAHO



E

1.5
acre-feet

**Average amount of
water applied per
acre in the U.S.**

**Arizona
applied the
most water
per acre
in 2023,
averaging
4.3 acre-feet.**

SOAK UP OPPORTUNITIES IN FFA

If you want to continue learning about water use and explore how it relates to a potential career in agriculture, check out these awesome opportunities.

COMPETITIVE EVENTS

The following career and leadership development events (CDEs and LDEs) can help you gain skills while sharing topics and issues, such as those connected to water, with a broader audience.

- **Agricultural Communications CDE**
- **Agricultural Issues Forum LDE**
- **Agronomy CDE**
- **Environment and Natural Resources CDE**
- **Prepared Public Speaking LDE**

SUPERVISED AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCES (SAEs) AND AGRICULTURAL PROFICIENCY AWARDS

These projects emphasize hands-on learning, and you may receive awards and recognition for your hard work. Since water touches so many areas of agriculture, the possibilities are endless. Here are some starting points.

- **Agriscience Research**
- **Diversified Crop Production**
- **Diversified Horticulture**
- **Nursery Operations**
- **Wildlife Production and Management**

CAREERS

Your future could be tied to water. There are dozens of paths available, some of which you may not have thought of.

- **Alternative energy specialist**
- **Aquaculturist**
- **Biological technician**
- **Conservation officer**
- **Saltwater husbandry technician**

Continue your search at
AgExplorer.FFA.org



SEED participants Ava Coddington (left) and Eliza Uliczny (right) check out the view from the top of one of Keystone Cooperative's grain branches.

Career Prep Pipeline

AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAM LED BY KEYSTONE COOPERATIVE IN INDIANA HELPS FFA ALUMS SECURE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. – By Renee Mulvihill

Graduating FFA members now have a unique opportunity to jump headfirst into agriculture-focused careers.

Keystone Cooperative, a 100% farmer-owned cooperative serving customers in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan, launched its Securing Experience and Employment Development (SEED) program in 2024 after two former Indiana FFA state officers pitched the idea to the company's senior leaders. A proud sponsor of FFA, Keystone Cooperative donated \$40,000 to the Indiana FFA Foundation in 2024, which corporate partner Syngenta matched at the national level.

"Our goal is to create a seamless pipeline for students who are smart and passionate about agriculture, but don't want to go to college," says Sarah Morehouse, SEED program coordinator for Keystone Cooperative.

The current class of six SEED participants started the program in June 2024 and plan to complete it in May 2026. Working as full-time employees, these participants rotate through each of Keystone Cooperative's divisions: grain, energy, agronomy, swine and animal nutrition and corporate. Keystone Cooperative provides housing for the employees as needed and offers them full-time benefits.

Lots of Lessons

Eliza Uliczny, an Indiana FFA Alumna and current SEED participant, applied for the program because she knew she wanted to work in agriculture in some capacity. She's been impressed by how much she learned through the program already.

"There are so many aspects of agriculture that Keystone Cooperative is involved in, and I've been able to learn about all those different things," Uliczny says.

For example, she's gotten to ride along with sales reps in the agronomy division, loaded and unloaded trucks in the grain division and worked at the farm store. Uliczny and another SEED participant also took a shift running the cooperative's feed mill by themselves.

Ultimately, Keystone Cooperative leaders hope to find a place in the company where SEED professionals will continue to build their careers. After their two-year program ends, they have an opportunity to start an apprenticeship program; the sky's the limit from there.

In the meantime, established employees are realizing the benefit new perspectives from SEED participants brings — they've hired 18 new SEED participants for 2025. As for the current participants, they're gaining an inside look into many aspects of agriculture and are discovering new things about themselves in the process.

"I've been surprised in all sorts of ways. I never would have imagined I would learn how to set up a propane tank," Uliczny says. "I hope this leads me to a career with Keystone Cooperative, something that I can grow into long term."



Six SEED participants meet for a Development Day, where they learned more about Keystone Cooperative's agronomy division.

FUTURE FOCUSED

Find additional details about Keystone Cooperative's SEED program at KeystoneCoop.com/Careers/Seed/.

4 Strategies to Succeed in Sales

Preparing today can set you up for the future — just ask this National FFA Career Development Event individual winner and National FFA corporate partner. — By Jodi Helmer

Aliyah Scarlato is a freshman on the pre-law track at the University of California, Los Angeles. Although the Galt-Liberty Ranch FFA Alumna doesn't plan to pursue a career in sales, participating — and taking top honors — in the 2024 National FFA Agricultural Sales Career Development Event (CDE) helped put her on the path to success.

"FFA and its competitions helped me a lot with public speaking," says Scarlato. "I don't think I would have done a lot of the things I do now without the organization."

As you grow your skills, apply these top tips from Scarlato and Jami

Photography: Courtesy of Aliyah Scarlato

[CAREER SUCCESS]

Limestall, the digital learning enablement lead at Bayer.

1. Do your research.

Learning all about a product is the first step in a successful sale. Scarlato "sold" pig feed at the state competition and Kubota equipment at the national competition. To prepare for her sales pitch, she reviewed product information, studied company websites, watched YouTube videos and went on industry tours.

"Being able to apply the knowledge of seeing [the product] in person was something I did a lot during the sales presentations," she says.

2. Practice.

There's more to sales than knowing the specifications. Limestall encourages students to research how the product helps customers.

"It's about getting the general information then letting [students] practice the sale," she says.

3. Build rapport.

"A mistake is not looking at the needs and wants of the customer and just throwing information at them," Scarlato says. Instead, take time to make small talk and get to know your customer to build their trust.



In addition to securing the top participant award, Aliyah Scarlato helped her team receive second place honors during the 97th National FFA Convention & Expo in Indianapolis.

4. Stand out.

In FFA competitions, judges hear similar sales pitches from multiple members. Scarlato says projecting confidence and engaging in conversation make a presentation memorable.

"Being a helpful, personable and confident character who genuinely wants to build a connection with them is a lot better than just pushing a product," she adds.

Start Selling

Scan this code to access "Entering the Sales World," an interactive lesson created by National FFA in partnership with Bayer, to help apply what you've learned.



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A Sweet Opportunity

FOUNDERS HALL

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FOUNDED 1909

Since Milton Hershey School was established 116 years ago, countless students and educators have walked through the doors of Founders Hall.

Community

Milton Hershey School grows leaders through classwork, community and hands-on learning.

BY JODI HELMER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS SIMPSON

When chocolate magnate Milton S. Hershey and his wife, Catherine, founded Milton Hershey School (MHS) in Hershey, Penn., in 1909, their goal was to provide a tuition-free, private education for students from low-income families. Their school's commitment to providing a rigorous academic environment that includes education in agriculture and vocational disciplines to "transform lives" remains unchanged.

"Milton Hershey did give a lot to start the school, and he wanted it to be agriculture-focused," says Logan Keister, an MHS senior and the MHS FFA Chapter's secretary. "The fact we are still carrying on the tradition of what he set in stone many, many generations ago feels like we're doing great work and trying to do our best to keep it alive."

The Agriculture and Environmental Education (AEE) program includes an Environmental Center, Animal Center, Horticultural Center and Ice Cream Center that provide one-of-a-kind



Harleigh Myers stops and smiles with one of the sheep being raised in her school's Animal Center.



In addition to taking classes, Milton Hershey School students live and work on campus — a well-rounded experience that helps them gain real-world skills.

Right: The school's campus includes a statue of Milton and Catherine Hershey, which serves as a reminder of their school's long-standing history and traditions.

Below: Tristian Miller (left), Anna Sargent (middle) and Jesse Boron (right) check on the hanging baskets.



opportunities to care for animals — including horses, cattle, goats, sheep, rabbits, reptiles and amphibians — as well as grow crops, tend orchards and learn about floriculture production.

In addition to classroom instruction, MHS offers extracurricular activities to help pre-K through 12th-grade students gain additional experiences in agriculture. These include horsemanship and soap-making clubs, growing succulents, making ice

cream, internships and student work opportunities to continue building knowledge. Students can also join the school's FFA chapter.

Interest in hands-on education and learning opportunities is widespread. Although MHS prioritizes students from surrounding counties and the state of Pennsylvania, students from as far as Alaska and Hawaii have studied at MHS.

There were just two students in the AEE program when Nick



“I was always interested in farm life, but I never had the opportunities before now.”

- Kalena Williams-Ross

Isenberg started teaching agricultural science at MHS 20 years ago. Now, 42 students are enrolled in the program. Isenberg believes the integration of Curriculum for Agricultural Science (CASE) courses designed to prepare students for college and career readiness, “have added rigor and relevance” that has helped build interest and engagement in the program.

Dairy Leaders of Tomorrow.

“I’ve wanted to be a farmer my whole life,” he says. “When I came here [in ninth grade], I realized we have such a great opportunity. We can help with feeding, giving shots, learn about diseases ... some days we do animal therapy, and we can come down here and spend the afternoon with the animals.”

Participating in the MHS FFA Chapter also helped Keister expand his skills. “Going to different competitions and having an actual farm on campus where we have live animals that we can evaluate whenever we want gives us more of an advantage than other teams,” he says.

“I was talking to a couple members [at national FFA convention] and they said, ‘We don’t even get half the opportunities you guys do,’” Keister adds. “I didn’t realize how lucky we are at MHS, and most of that is due to Mr. Isenberg; he pushes us out of our comfort zone really well.”

Isenberg, who planned to work for the family dairy farm until his agriculture teacher encouraged him to pursue a career in agricultural education, appreciates the credit.

“It’s great having students who are willing to listen to me, take a chance and try different FFA activities and competitions,” he says. “When they come back, they always say, ‘That was a little nerve-racking, but I had fun.’ It happens every time.”

Room to Grow

Kalena Williams-Ross is a senior at MHS and the MHS FFA Chapter’s treasurer. When she enrolled in the school in fifth grade, she was interested in animals, but had no previous interactions with cows, goats, sheep or other livestock. Now, she’s planning to enroll in the pre-vet program at Delaware Valley University.

“I was always interested in farm life, but I never had the opportunities before now,” says Williams-Ross. “When I visited here, I was just like, ‘Wow, what is this place? It’s a new world.’”

Keister also enrolled in the AEE program with a strong interest in agriculture. After graduation, he hopes to secure an internship with



Above: Chloe Kreiser gently cares for plants.

Left: Jesse Boron (left) and Kourtney Daley (right) water flowers in the Horticultural Center.



The Agriculture and Environmental Education (AEE) program includes an Environmental Center, Animal Center, Horticultural Center and Ice Cream Center.

Alana Christian enjoys a special moment with baby goats.

Found Family

It's not just the academic environment that makes MHS stand out. Students who attend live with "houseparents" in on-campus housing, and seniors move into apartment-style residences to learn the basics of budgeting and household management

before graduation.

"We're all on the same campus; we see each other 24/7," Williams-Ross says. "We share the same buildings and we're always in the student homes from freshman to junior year ... and it allows us to share experiences. If you're wary about the AEE program, you can ask people who have already gone through it, or who are going through it

with you, and it makes me feel like I'm not as alone."

This residential setting creates connectedness among students in different grades who live and work together, and it's common for students in the agriculture program to turn to one another for advice and support when navigating life on campus.

"Being in AEE creates a family dynamic," says

Edythe Rossman, an MHS senior and the MHS FFA Chapter's vice president.

"It's very nice to have a group of people you can call your sisters and brothers. It's given me so many opportunities, especially because I'm just shy and [working on] getting out of my comfort zone. Being in an area with lots of people, different stories and backgrounds and learning so



Logan Keister ponders the possibilities of what his future in agriculture could include.



Above: Advisor Nick Isenberg (left) encourages students like Tristian Miller (right) to expand their knowledge, both inside and outside of the classroom. **Below:** Located in a community known for its iconic chocolate company, Milton Hershey School upholds a standard of excellence inspired by its founders.



Below, left to right: Nick Isenberg (right) leads Jaionna Lewis (left) through an interactive activity in class. Milton Hershey School FFA members gain farm-to-table experiences by growing plants in their school's greenhouses and raised beds.



Seeds of Knowledge

Scan this code to watch and learn how Milton Hershey School FFA members receive a one-of-a-kind education.



many new things has been so good for me.”

In addition to providing top-notch education, hands-on learning and helping students build new relationships, the tight-knit campus and robust agriculture program also benefit the surrounding community. MHS hosts plant sales, petting zoos and open house events, and students sell produce grown

on the farm in the MHS Project Market. They also run Spartan Ice Cream Center, a campus ice cream shop that’s a local favorite.

Rossman hopes inviting the community onto the MHS campus will help others understand the importance and benefits of agricultural education.

“I wish people had a better understanding of what agriculture is and what it

does for us,” she says. “There’s more to it than animals, mud and tractors, and I feel like that’s what people associate us with. So, I feel like if we could give them a better understanding, we could change that.”

Learn more about enrolling at Milton Hershey School at MHSKids.org/Admissions/ and the careers available at MHSKids.org/Careers/. •

Tahja Sims deepened her understanding of agriculture by attending Texas A&M University.



FRESH PERSPECTIVES

Tahja Sims broadens her horizons as she works to amplify voices in agriculture. – By Kim Hill

This year, Texas FFA Alumna Tahja Sims is exploring a variety of agricultural topics and issues, and elevating diverse perspectives, as part of a year-long internship with AGDAILY, a digital publication and news outlet.

“I explain diversity as people who have found connections to agriculture in unexpected ways,” Sims says. “It’s broad, and could include women farmers, especially in developing countries, or small growers responding quickly to consumer trends and preferences.”

A recent graduate of Texas A&M University with a major in agricultural economics, Sims analyzed racial inequalities and misinformation in food and environmental policy as

an undergraduate research assistant. She also interned with the U.S. House of Representatives and The Russell Group, a government relations firm specializing in food and agriculture public policy, and is a member of the Minorities in Agriculture, National Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) organization.

Although she has extensive experiences, Sims says she’s surprised everyday by, “how widespread agriculture is and that diversity can be found in the smallest, most unexpected places.” She cites recent AGDAILY interviews with a Wisconsin producer running a cattle operation on 13 acres and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in North Carolina hosting

a 4-H camp focused on developing college preparedness.

Hooked on Animals

Sims’ introduction to agriculture occurred in middle school, when FFA members from a nearby high school in Spring, Texas, hosted a booth at a school event.

“They explained FFA helped develop leadership and members raised animals, but all I heard was ‘animals’ because I had never had a pet,” she says. “My first FFA animal was a rabbit, but that wasn’t interactive enough for me.”

Raising pigs proved pivotal. Feeding, brushing and walking her pig twice a day provided the hands-on, nurturing experience Sims sought. “I had no idea what I was doing, but with the help of my advisor, I learned,” she adds.

She also participated in competitions like the Texas FFA Quiz Bowl. “The greatest lesson I learned in FFA is that how much you put into something is how much you will get out of it. With my pigs, I had no idea what I was doing at first, so I felt really accomplished when I did it.”

As she continues to amplify agriculture’s many voices through her internship, Sims learns more about the industry’s impact. “There is not one face or model for what agriculture is,” she says. “It’s continually changing as it addresses the needs of the population, which is continuously changing as well.”



After joining FFA, Sims quickly fell in love with the process of raising and showing pigs.

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EQUINE LESSONS

LUCY BARNEY SHARES THE INSPIRATION BEHIND HER PASSION FOR HORSES AND THE DAILY ROUTINES THAT SHAPED HER AWARD-WINNING FFA PROJECT. – By Abbey Tauchen

For Lucy Barney, working with Shire and Belgian draft horses is a tradition passed through six generations. Her hard work and lifelong journey recently came to fruition when she was named the 2024 national champion in the Equine Science — Placement Agricultural Proficiency Award category.

Representing Rigby High School in Idaho, Barney's award-winning Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) showcased her extensive hands-on experience with draft horses. "I had amazing advisors who pushed me to succeed," she says.

LIFE SHAPED BY AN SAE

SAEs are more than just projects. They provide real-world agricultural training supported by classroom learning and mentorship. Barney's SAE took place at her two family-run operations: Sage Ridge Farms Pulling Horses and the Barney Shires Draft Horse Hitch. These farms offer the facilities to care for, train and prepare 2,000-pound draft horses for competition, allowing Barney to gain experience in breeding, nutrition, training and marketing.

"I've worked closely with my family and networked with other breeders and industry professionals," she says.

SUMMER SCHEDULE

Barney's days are long and full of hard work. She balances the physical demands of caring for the horses with the marketing and management responsibilities of running a family operation. A typical day is long, physical and varied.

- 6-7 a.m. — Move irrigation pipes on grazing fields.
- 8-9 a.m. — Clean stalls.
- Mid-morning — Condition Belgian pulling horses.

- Afternoon — Mix custom feed, maintain fences and sanitize the facilities.
- Midday — Capture marketing photos and manage social media accounts.
- 6 p.m. onward — Drive competition horses on six-mile sled routines, then groom, hydrate and turn out to pasture.

COMPETITION DAYS

Presenting the horses to judges and show attendees requires careful preparation and planning. These days combine chores, detailed horse prep and, of course, showtime.

- 5-6 a.m. — Clean stalls before the public arrives.
- 7-8 a.m. — Feed and water horses.
- Morning — Wash and groom horses, focusing on their feathered hooves.
- Pre-show — Braid manes, apply bows and prepare the harness.
- 9-10 a.m. — Competitions begin.
- Afternoon — Cool down the horses, monitor their health and feed as needed.

LOOKING AHEAD

Now studying accounting at Utah State University, Barney plans to return to the family operations after graduation. She hopes to manage the business side while staying active in care and competitions.

"I want to continue my passion in the draft horse industry," she says. "With financial stability, I can help carry on the legacy."



Above: Lucy Barney continues to spend time around horses and stay involved with her family's operations.

Below: Show days are a chance for Barney to showcase the time, care and attention she devotes to raising and training horses.



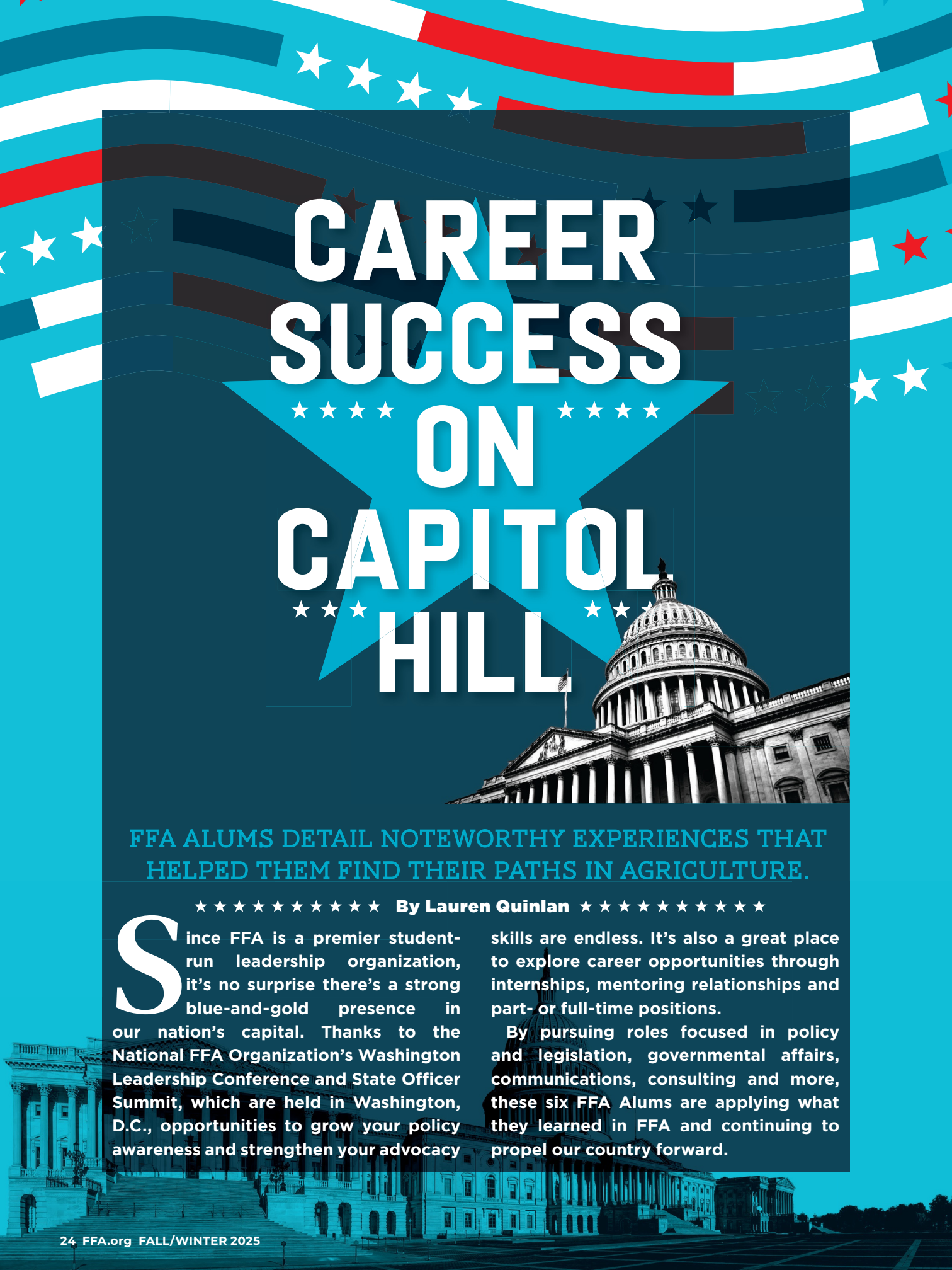
Barney encourages younger FFA members to pursue their SAEs with the same dedication.

"Just go for it," she says. "There's nothing to be afraid of, and the opportunities are endless."

SPRINGBOARD TO SUCCESS

Scan this code to explore the National FFA Agricultural Proficiency Awards categories and access a full list of previous winners.





CAREER SUCCESS ON CAPITOL HILL

FFA ALUMS DETAIL NOTEWORTHY EXPERIENCES THAT
HELPED THEM FIND THEIR PATHS IN AGRICULTURE.

★★★★★★★★★★ **By Lauren Quinlan** ★★★★★★★★★★

Since FFA is a premier student-run leadership organization, it's no surprise there's a strong blue-and-gold presence in our nation's capital. Thanks to the National FFA Organization's Washington Leadership Conference and State Officer Summit, which are held in Washington, D.C., opportunities to grow your policy awareness and strengthen your advocacy

skills are endless. It's also a great place to explore career opportunities through internships, mentoring relationships and part- or full-time positions.

By pursuing roles focused in policy and legislation, governmental affairs, communications, consulting and more, these six FFA Alums are applying what they learned in FFA and continuing to propel our country forward.



Members of the 1990-91 Texas FFA State Officer Team reunite to celebrate Brooke Rollins' (fifth from right) USDA appointment.

BROOKE ROLLINS

Submitted by 2024-25 FFA in the USA Reporter Camryn Craddock

CURRENT ROLE:
SECRETARY OF
AGRICULTURE, UNITED
STATES DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE (USDA)

FFA INVOLVEMENT

- Glen Rose FFA Alumna
- Texas FFA state first vice president (1990-91)

EDUCATION:

- Texas A&M University, BS in agricultural development
- The University of Texas School of Law, JD



Serving as a Texas FFA state officer helped Rollins (back row, third from right) unlock her leadership potential and develop lifelong friendships with her nine teammates.

As a Howe FFA member from Texas, I experienced the special kind of relationship FFA officer teams can create. However, nothing compares to what I witnessed on Jan. 23, 2025, when the 1990-91 Texas FFA state officer team gathered in Washington, D.C., to support one of its own, Brooke Rollins, during her Senate confirmation hearing.

"It was such a defining moment," says 1990-91 Texas FFA state vice president Melinda (Beckendorf) Gordon. "It truly summed up who we are as a team and as individuals. Our connection can't be explained in words; we truly love and adore each other."

Rollins' mother, Helen Kerwin, along with her agriculture teacher and Glen Rose FFA advisor, Gary Rosenbusch, encouraged her to pursue FFA opportunities like showing goats, public speaking and running for state office. "Before I was elected, my mom and sisters were my only family,"

Rollins says. ***"The state officer team I served with became my family, too."***

Her year of service to the Texas FFA Association sparked a desire to continue developing her leadership skills. After high school, Rollins made history as the first female student body president of Texas A&M University before attending law school. She then worked for former Texas governor Rick Perry, ran the Texas Public Policy Foundation, became the founding president and chief executive officer of the American First Policy Institute and held roles under President Donald Trump's administration before her most recent appointment to the USDA.

The 1990-91 Texas FFA state officer team wasn't just a group of individuals; they were a team that supported one another, led and had fun. Thirty-five years later, I hope their bond inspires you to be the teammate your chapter, state and this organization needs.

TRACEY MANN



CURRENT ROLE:
**UNITED STATES
REPRESENTATIVE, KANSAS
FIRST DISTRICT; CO-FOUNDER
AND CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL
FFA CAUCUS**

FFA INVOLVEMENT

• Quinter FFA Alumnus

EDUCATION:

• Kansas State University, BS in
agricultural economics

Tracey Mann honors his Kansas FFA roots by
proudly wearing his corduroy jacket.

Tracey Mann's world revolves around relationships. As the fifth generation to grow up on his family farm, he now represents the needs and interests of farmers, ranchers and producers in his home state of Kansas. The three-time chapter officer also applies the networking and public speaking skills he gained in FFA to his role as a U.S. Congressman.

"I had been around agriculture and understood the importance of sound food and farm policy, but my experiences in FFA taught me how to advocate for those,"

Mann says. "I'm also grateful for the lessons I learned from my advisor and his leadership of our program. He was a great mentor, teacher and friend."

After being elected to Congress in 2020, Mann recognized a need to support school-based agricultural education and career and technical education in Washington, D.C. So, he worked with Representative Jimmy Panetta to establish the Congressional FFA Caucus in 2021.

"We wanted to create a group dedicated to strengthening the next generation of agricultural leaders and students pursuing careers in agriculture, food, natural resources and related sciences," Mann says. "[The Caucus] reflects a broad coalition of individuals who want to support those who will feed, clothe and fuel the world."

Mann encourages FFA members and alums interested in policy-focused careers to lean into their existing networks and to not be afraid of making new connections.

"Get involved at the local level and be involved in your communities," he adds. "Take advantage of the leadership skills and professional development opportunities available in FFA. Lastly, be curious, learn as much as you can and don't be afraid to use your voice."





Spending time around cattle was the spark that ignited Venus Welch-White's interest in agriculture.



CURRENT ROLE:
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, CROPLIFE AMERICA (FORMERLY ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY)

FFA INVOLVEMENT

- Seminole Vocational Education Center
FFA Alumna

EDUCATION:

- Tuskegee University, BS in biology; MS and PhD in integrative biosciences



Taking veterinary assistance courses at her Florida high school helped Venus Welch-White develop an affinity for working with animals. Raising and showing cattle at county and state fairs as an FFA member also taught her about the time commitment and dedication needed to care for livestock.

"It solidified me as an 'agriculture girl,'" she says.

Welch-White found her niche working in the intersection of agriculture and environmental policy. She began her federal government career as a Presidential Management Fellow working for the USDA's Rural Development mission area. Six years later, she made the leap to the Environmental Protection Agency, where supported various agriculture-focused topics, before transitioning to her most recent position with Croplife America.

"To whom much is given, much is required, so I feel blessed to be in a position to advocate for all farmers, producers and the entire

agriculture community," Welch-White says. "One stakeholder told me, 'I don't know anyone who loves agriculture more than you.'"

For those interested in policy and legislation, Welch-White says to take risks and maximize opportunities to learn and grow. For example, interning with the Alabama State Senate and Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. (which is owned by Corteva Agriscience) in Iowa helped her understand how federal decisions and state policies impact local communities, enabling her to become an advocate for agriculture at the federal and state level.

"Everything you're doing now will lead you to exactly where you are supposed to be," Welch-White says.

"There are both lessons and blessings in mistakes. In those moments, the difficulty doesn't define you — it's responding with kindness and grace, being accountable and your resilience that ultimately sets you apart."

VENUS WELCH-WHITE



Below: Michael Torrey (left) receives his American FFA Degree, the highest degree awarded to FFA members.



CURRENT ROLE:

PRESIDENT, TORREY ADVISORY GROUP

FFA INVOLVEMENT

- Wamego FFA Alumnus
- Kansas FFA state officer (1982-83)
- Kansas FFA Star Agribusinessman (1982)

EDUCATION:

- Kansas State University, BS in agricultural economics

MICHAEL TORREY

As a Kansas FFA member and officer, Michael Torrey enjoyed participating in public and extemporaneous speaking, livestock judging and parliamentary procedure — competitions he says came naturally and taught him skills he applies today.

“Learning how to capture an audience and present facts in a succinct and meaningful way have served me well,” he says.

After graduating from college and working for the Kansas Grain and Feed Association, Torrey spent 10 years in the public service

sector. Today, “helping organizations that need to engage with the federal government” is the guiding purpose behind Torrey Advisory Group, which he founded in 2005.

“What I like about my current role is it’s more than a job — it’s a mission to help the industry I love and strongly believe in,” he says.

Torrey continues to give back through supporting a National FFA Foundation program that helps cover expenses for selected participants who attend the State Officer Summit.

ASHLEY SMITH

Trips to Albany, N.Y., and Washington, D.C., as an FFA member piqued former state and national officer Ashley Smith’s interest in lobbying on behalf of agriculture.

“I remember sitting on an airport runway after a trip to D.C. and texting a mentor who was working on Capitol Hill something along the lines of ‘I want to be back here someday,’” Smith says. ***“I didn’t know it at the time, but I was building a passion that would turn into my full-time career.”***

Today, Smith works at Torrey Advisory Group, a multi-client agriculture and food consulting firm. Her main focus is what “impacts farmers’ bottom line and allows them to continue to produce a safe, abundant and affordable food supply.” In the process, she enjoys meeting new people and finding common ground.

“Don’t be afraid to send an email, make an introduction or set up a coffee date with someone,” she adds. “Be kind to everyone you meet and seek to learn from those around you.”

CURRENT ROLE:

DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, TORREY ADVISORY GROUP

FFA INVOLVEMENT

- Lowville FFA Alumna
- New York FFA state president (2013-14)
- National FFA eastern region vice president (2016-17)

EDUCATION:

- Morrisville State College, AAS in agricultural business
- Tarleton State University, BS in agricultural communications



Above: Ashley Smith’s (far left) year as a national FFA officer included visiting the nation’s capitol with her five teammates.

Below: During a trip to Washington, D.C., Smith toured the USDA.





CHASE KUSEL

CURRENT ROLE:
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS,
NATIONAL FARMERS UNION

FFA INVOLVEMENT

- Benton Community FFA Alumnus
- Iowa FFA state secretary (2016-17)
- National FFA Agricultural Communications Career Development Event committee member (2024-Present)

EDUCATION:

- Iowa State University, BS in public relations and minor in political science

Chase Kusel grew up on his family's row-crop farm in Iowa, but attributes his love for advocacy and storytelling to a willingness to say "yes" to new avenues and opportunities.

Kusel found his voice participating in chapter activities and FFA competitions. These experiences, combined with those he gained while serving as a state officer, also helped him discover different ways to be involved in the industry outside of farming. After college, he worked for several marketing and communications agencies before accepting his current role.

"There's no 'right' path in agriculture, and it's OK if your future doesn't look like everyone else's," Kusel says.

His professional mission is to "elevate the voices of family farmers, ranchers and rural communities." Kusel's position includes leading public policy messaging and media relations, digital content, events and grassroots advocacy efforts for National Farmers Union.

"I've found success by staying true to my roots, building strong relationships and never forgetting who I'm advocating for," Kusel says. "FFA gave me a foundation, and I've continued to learn, grow and speak up for the people and places I care the most about."



Chase Kusel (right) dove headfirst into FFA by competing in career development events.

LEADERS IN ACTION

These FFA alums are also making strides in their chosen career paths.

Lindsey Abentroth — Youth Coordinator, USDA

Spencer Chase — Senior Director of Communications, Corn Refiners Association

Lori Chavez DeRemer — Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor

Jaye Hamby — Director, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Lydia Johnson — Associate Editor, Agri-Pulse Communications

Sadie Knight — Director of Grassroots Advocacy, National Corn Growers Association

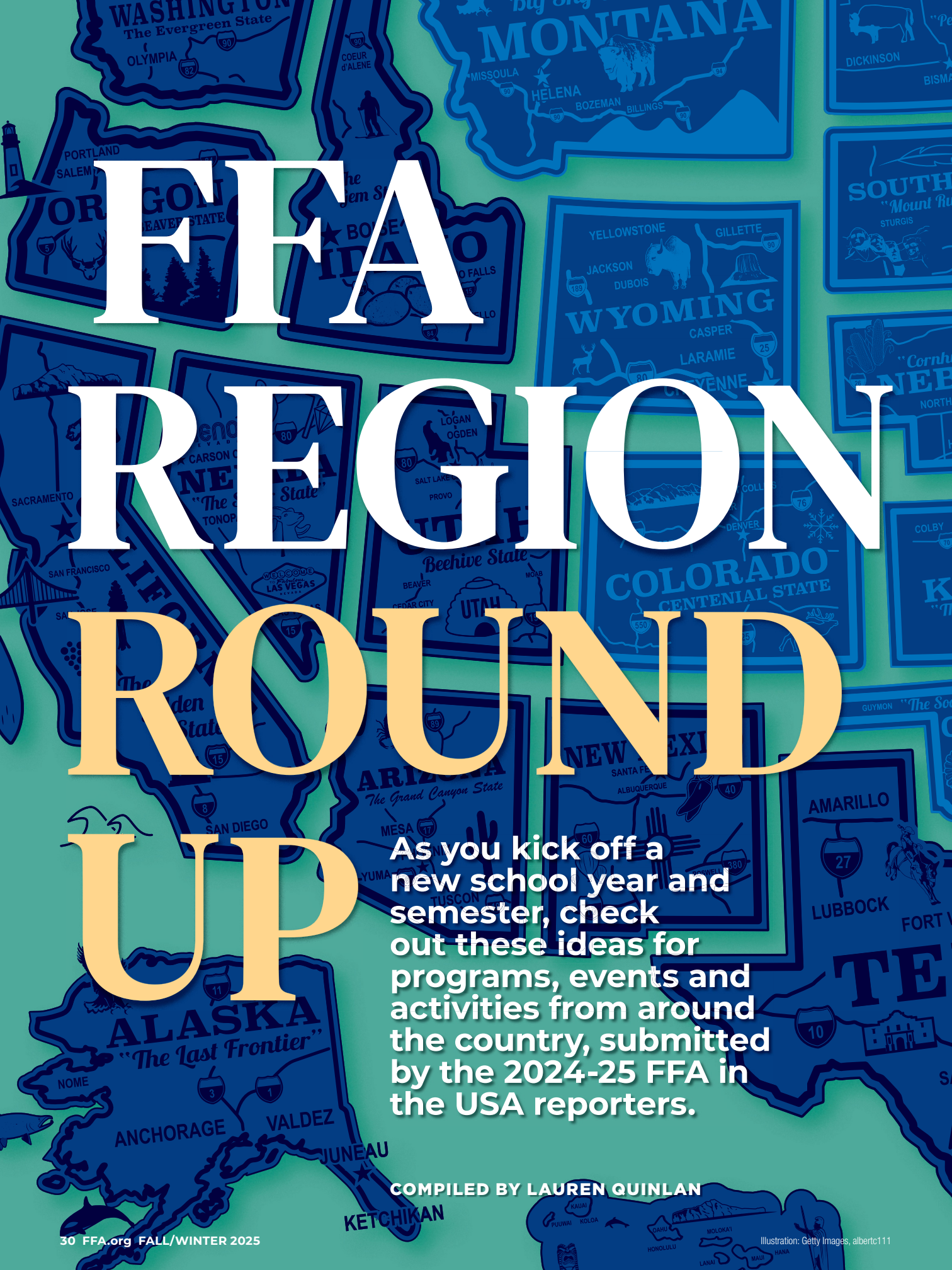
Josie Monteney-Crawford — Professional Staff Member, U.S. Representatives House Committee on Agriculture

Riley Pagett — Chief of Staff for Trade and Foreign Affairs, USDA

Marty Tatman — Senior Director of Member Engagement, American Farm Bureau Federation

OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

Visit FFA.org/Ag-Literacy-and-Advocacy to check out the four steps for effective advocacy, trending agriculture topics and issues, helpful modules and more. The National FFA Agricultural Literacy and Advocacy platform is sponsored by corporate partners Growth Energy, Merck Animal Health, Nestlé USA and Syngenta.



FFA REGION ROUNDUP

As you kick off a new school year and semester, check out these ideas for programs, events and activities from around the country, submitted by the 2024-25 FFA in the USA reporters.

COMPILED BY LAUREN QUINLAN



Superstar Storytellers

Now in its second year, the FFA in the USA reporters program provides opportunities for selected chapter and state reporters to flourish creatively. By interviewing sources, writing articles, creating photo slideshows and producing videos — all of which are published on **FFA.org** — these talented communicators and journalists are honing their craft, one story at a time. Fresh content is posted each month, so check **FFA.org/FFA-in-the-USA/** regularly to review the latest news. You can also learn more about this year's group of reporters at **FFA.org/About-FFA-in-the-USA/** and share your ideas at **FFA.org/Submit-Your-Story**.



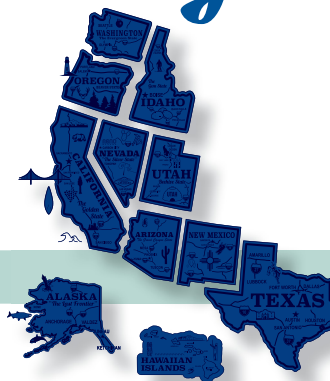
THIS EXCLUSIVE AND EXPANDED STORY FEATURES A FUN TWIST ON THE BELOVED FFA IN THE USA SECTION THAT BEGAN IN 2017.

WESTERN *Region*



2024-25 NATIONAL FFA VICE PRESIDENT:

Abigale Jacobsen
CALIFORNIA • ELK GROVE FFA



The Sprout Scouts

By Trent Oney, Washington

Recognizing the important role of daffodils as a symbol of hope in their community, Sumner FFA members created interactive lessons about them for elementary students. “We wanted to give them a tactile experience,” says Maria Montoya, the chapter’s advisor. These activities cover topics ranging from planting bulbs to growth patterns, the flower’s life cycle and more.



Sumner FFA members Cortlynn Joyce (far left), Tessie Stockwell (second from left), Lainey Orm (center), DaniRose Huss (second from right) and Olivia Anderson (far right) smile in front of daffodils planted in their hometown.

Bingo Bash

By Madison Kenyon, New Mexico

The annual “Dora Fun Night” facilitates camaraderie and community involvement. Funds raised support future Dora FFA Chapter activities as well as members and teams competing in events throughout the year.

A Cultural Revival

By Joleena Ibarra, California

One of the Sherman Indian FFA Chapter’s newest events is creating avenues for collaboration and cultural understanding. A bracket-style competition features traditional Native American games that have been passed through generations.

Traveling Trophy

By Sarah Jones, Idaho

The North Upper Snake River District officer team encouraged members to participate in social media challenges featuring a special twist. A rubber chicken named “Patricia” was awarded to chapters with the greatest online engagement during FFA events and activities.



SOUTHERN

Region



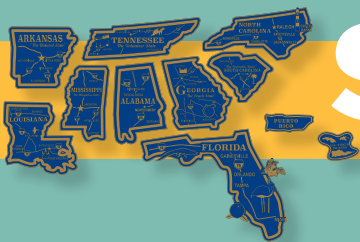
2024-25 NATIONAL FFA
VICE PRESIDENT:

Jack
Lingenfelter
GEORGIA
Coffee High FFA

Chapters Pair Up

By Haley Parsons, Georgia

Oconee FFA and North Oconee FFA partnered to clean up a local wildlife preserve. From digging up roots to transporting weeds and overgrown plants, members worked together to promote environmental growth and protection.



SOUTHERN *Region*



Kinsley Spearman (left), Macy Aycock (center) and Claudia Hughes (right) participate in welding as Hamilton FFA members.

Women in Welding

By Kalem Hall, Mississippi

Hamilton FFA isn't just building skills — it's driving innovation and cultivating change. The chapter encourages all members to pursue their passions, including welding, and partners with a local, family-owned company to provide supplies, guidance and scholarships.

Locking in Connections

By Andrea Blaha, Florida

Deltona Sr. FFA created a "lock in" event for members to mingle, play games and eat food together. East Coast Federation FFA officers helped facilitate activities, and Deltona Middle School FFA members were also invited to join the fun.

Advisors Leave an Impact

By Sara Hinson, Arkansas

Several FFA advisors recently made it their mission to help members and chapters explore the career and leadership development events offered statewide. They host an annual mock competition, which serves as an opportunity to ask questions and share valuable knowledge.

CENTRAL *Region*



**2024-25 NATIONAL FFA
VICE PRESIDENT:**

**Mary
Schrieber**
WISCONSIN
East Troy FFA

Mastering the Motto

By Lily Bingaman, Montana

In their hometown of 2,000 people, Conrad FFA members are carrying on tradition by hosting the “Conrad Crops and Mechanics Seminar.” Twenty-eight chapters from around the state traveled this year to learn about aspects of agriculture and interact with industry professionals.



BRING YOUR

Passion.

WE’LL PROVIDE THE REST.

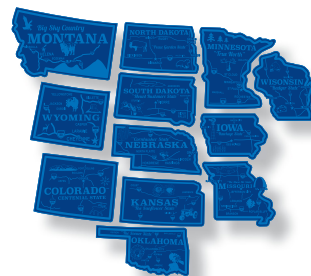
Leadership. Service. Hands-on learning. The passions you develop through FFA are the same ones we share in the Oklahoma State University Ferguson College of Agriculture. With 16 majors and over 50 study options, we offer opportunities to study and apply knowledge in areas that inspire you.

Schedule a campus tour to discover how you can turn your passion into your future career in the
Ferguson College of Agriculture.



**FERGUSON COLLEGE
OF AGRICULTURE**

CENTRAL *Region*



Pig Project

By Wyatt Lesmeister, South Dakota

The Gettysburg FFA Chapter partners current members with youth interested in raising livestock. The project begins in the spring, then culminates with a show and premium sale held during the Porter County Fair. Participants learn about responsibility, animal care and food production through hands-on experiences focused in agriculture.

Gettysburg FFA members and participating elementary and middle school students received custom T-shirts to celebrate 20 years of the project.



Recruitment Day in Cougar County

By Lynlee McCurry, Oklahoma

Each February, Oklahoma Union FFA officers spend a morning welcoming students to school and sharing FFA experiences as a way to build interest in the chapter. Members also host a "day in the life" experience at its agriculture building and serve lunch to potential members.

FFA Week Activities

By Jordan Berg, Wisconsin

Chapters across the state found unique ways to celebrate the blue and gold. From teacher appreciation breakfasts to ice fishing competitions, alumni cornhole tournaments, trivia nights, school-wide assemblies and more, the possibilities were endless.

EASTERN *Region*



2024-25 NATIONAL FFA VICE PRESIDENT:

Caroline Groth

KENTUCKY • Locust Trace FFA

Stitching Communities Through Service

By Miru Kunst, Massachusetts

Norfolk FFA collaborated with “A Stitch Toward the Future,” a service-learning project focused on combining fiber arts and agricultural education. In three hours, members and supporters used donated materials, including fabric, to complete seven quilt tops. These were donated to a local resource center, and their efforts were featured on the evening news.

Past
Norfolk FFA
officers
Miru Kunst
(left),
Gabriella
Pannone
(middle)
and Jaxon
Sennott
(right) dis-
play their
completed
quilt tops.



We've Got History

By Grace Conley, Kentucky

To help members understand the importance of recording events and successes, as well as inspire new ideas, Bourbon County FFA creates chapter scrapbooks. These projects connect the chapter's history to the present day and can be enjoyed for years to come.

Ready, Set, Splash

By Savannah Cycholl, Illinois

One thousand water balloons and an 84-degree day in August were the ingredients for the Olney FFA Chapter's water balloon event. Ninety-three members wrapped up the summer with outdoor games focused on fostering team-building, decision-making and problem-solving skills.

All-Members Workshop

By Grace Routhier, Maine

With help from state officers and the Maine FFA Alumni Association, participating members dove into workshops about parliamentary procedure, the FFA Creed and Official Dress. To round out the event, everyone gathered for karaoke and dancing.

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Virginia leaders laid the groundwork for what would become the National FFA Organization. – By Betty Haynes

In September 1925, four Virginia Tech educators changed American agricultural education.

Although agriculture programs and subject matter were gaining popularity after the turn of the century, Walter Newman, Edmund Magill, Harry Sanders and Henry Groseclose discovered an area where programing was falling short.

“Newman described a concern he had observed when farm boys didn’t have as much confidence in themselves as their city cousins,” says John Hillson, professor emeritus in Virginia Tech’s Department of Agricultural, Leadership and Community Education. “His solution was to start an organization that could instill self-expression and develop leadership skills and confidence for those farm boys.”

The others agreed, and the Future Farmers of Virginia (FFV) was soon born. In addition to promoting vocational agriculture in Virginia high schools, its primary purposes were to:

- Create an interest in agricultural pursuits and country life.
- Provide recreation and education opportunities.
- Promote thrift (financial stability).
- Create cooperative buying and selling opportunities.
- Establish confidence in members.

In 1927, the first FFV convention was held at Virginia Tech — a full year before the first National FFA Convention was held in Kansas City, Mo. When the Future Farmers of America (now known as the National FFA Organization) was established in 1928, FFV received the organization’s first state charter.



FFV members attend the national FFA convention, an annual event that serves as a time to gather and celebrate accomplishments.

100 YEARS LATER

Today, the National FFA Organization includes more than 1 million members in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. It’s difficult



Andrew Seibel retires his national officer jacket during the 96th National FFA Convention & Expo, symbolizing the completion of his year of service.

to imagine a world without FFA, especially for Virginia FFA Alums like 2022-23 National FFA President Andrew Seibel.

“It’s been really full circle to grow up in the place where FFA started,” Seibel says. “What started as a conversation has fundamentally changed the lives and trajectory of so many individuals around the nation.”

Seibel was initially hesitant to pursue running for national office, but says a group of friends inspired him to think otherwise.

“Leadership isn’t about title, prowess or how you carry yourself,” he adds. “True leadership is about your ability to relate, lift others up and be comfortable in your own skin as you maneuver life.”

Seibel thinks the FFV founders would be floored if they could see the organization’s impact today.

“When members come to an event and see other students in FFA jackets, the mission remains the same,” he says. “Students from all walks of life can receive value and find a place within their schools and communities where they belong.”

Timeless Traditions

As the National FFA Organization speeds toward its next monumental milestone, access a full timeline of historic events at FFA.org/FFA-History/.

FEEDING THE FARMERS

This Nebraska chapter gives back by serving meals and building relationships. — By Katie Navarra



Harvest season often leaves farmers with little time for a hot meal. For the last six years, Riverside FFA members have hosted a “Feed the Farmer” event in October to ensure those in their Nebraska community were well-fed during harvest.

“It’s hard for farmers to get out of the field,” says Riverside FFA Chapter President Nicholas Berger. “If they go home and eat, they’re taking time out of the day when they could be running the combine.”

So, the chapter meets farmers where they’re at — the local co-op — and provides a meal when they deliver grain or weigh their trucks. Farmers can grab a box on the go or take a break and eat on-site.

“We’re a combined school, so we try to have a site in Cedar Rapids and Spalding, so we’re serving both our communities,” Nicholas Berger adds.

The annual event is made possible thanks to the chapter’s partnership with Spalding Animal Clinic and the Zoetis Industry Support Program.

Members prepare at least 100 meals, which include sloppy joes, hot dogs, a bag of chips, a beverage and a sweet treat, for both co-op locations.

“We start planning at the Chapter Officer Leadership Training (COLT) conference put on by our state FFA officers [during the summer],” Nicholas Berger says. “Then, two to three weeks before the event, we are in ‘go mode’ getting all the food ready.”

Event Planning, Too

Riverside FFA advisor Lacey Berger says the school’s agricultural leadership class is also involved in planning the student-led event. The class creates the budget and searches for the best prices, comparing costs and deciding whether it’s more cost-effective to buy through the school kitchen, the nearby Sam’s Club or local grocery stores.

The hardest part of planning the event, Lacey Berger adds, is coordinating dates with the co-ops, as they also host “Feed the Farmer” events. However, she credits strong

CULTIVATE CONNECTIONS
Local engagement programs connect FFA chapters and their communities through blue jacket programs, grants, scholarships and additional forms of financial assistance. Learn how you can collaborate with agricultural retailers, equipment dealers, restaurants, manufacturers and more at [FFA.org/LocalEngagement](https://www.ffa.org/LocalEngagement).

relationships and student outreach for making it work.

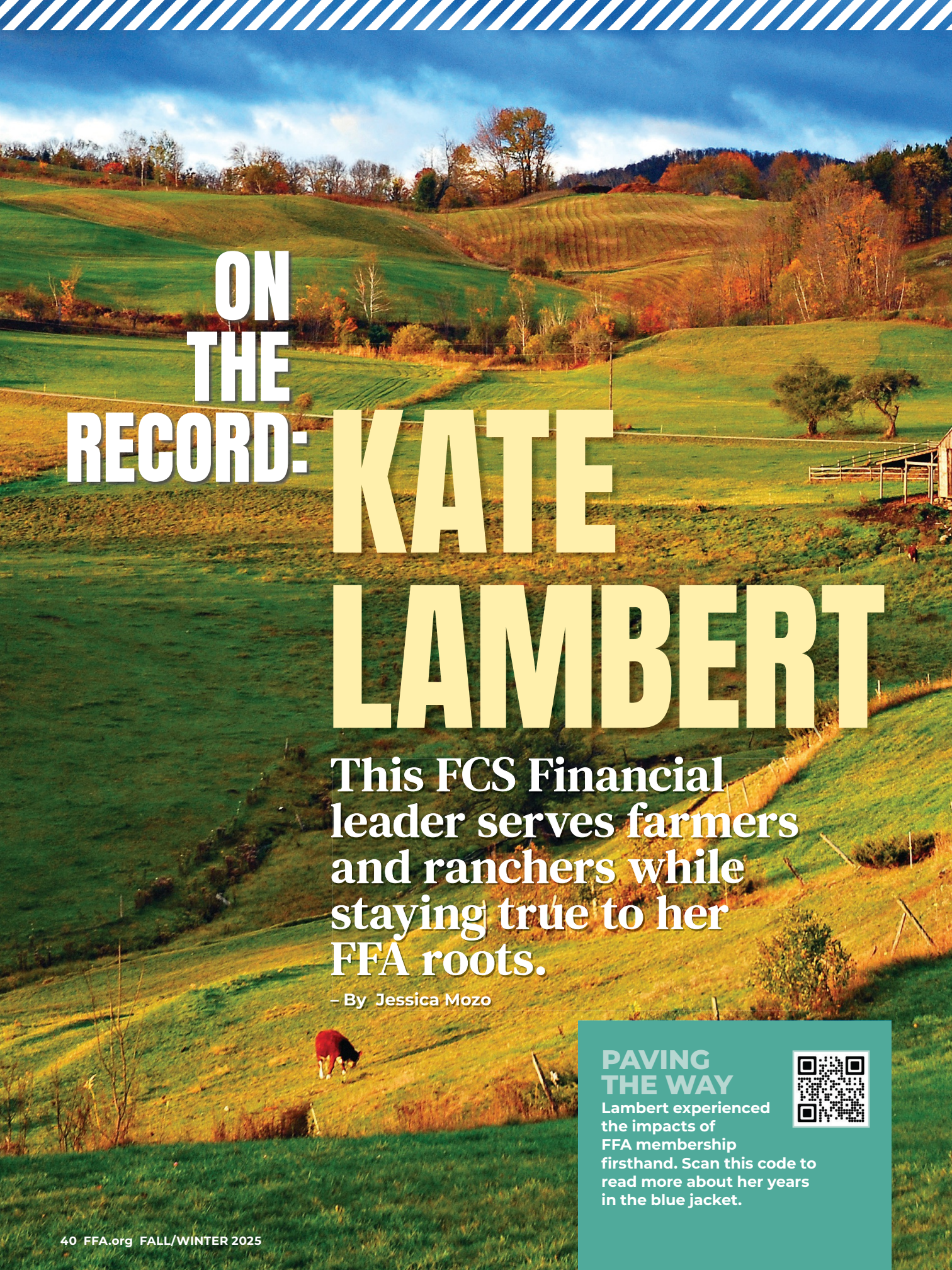
“We have an excellent relationship with the co-ops and students have relatives who work there, so it makes it easy to communicate with them,” she says. “I have students call and reach out because the co-ops appreciate hearing from them, and not all students talk on the phone on a regular basis. This gives them a chance to practice communication skills.”

The Spalding Animal Clinic also formally presents the Zoetis Industry Support Program certificate during the event, and the gathering helps students to hear directly from agricultural producers.

“They don’t always have the time to sit down with students,” Lacey Berger adds. “This creates an opportunity for conversations about what is going on in agriculture.”



Riverside FFA members take a break from preparing meals to accept a certificate recognizing their participation in the Zoetis Industry Support Program.



ON THE RECORD: KATE LAMBERT

This FCS Financial leader serves farmers and ranchers while staying true to her FFA roots.

— By Jessica Mozo

PAVING THE WAY

Lambert experienced the impacts of FFA membership firsthand. Scan this code to read more about her years in the blue jacket.



Throughout her career with FCS Financial, Kate Lambert has held roles that fit her growing interests and skill set.

“At the end of high school, it’s the experiences you had, the skills you developed and the relationships you made that matter most.”

– KATE LAMBERT



Kate Lambert works as senior vice president of marketing for FCS Financial, a farm credit cooperative

in Missouri. We chatted with Lambert about her FFA experiences and how she achieved success in her career.

Q: What is your favorite FFA memory?

A: FFA was literally life-changing for me. I competed in several different career and leadership development events throughout the years, and I’ll never forget my first state convention and the energy it gave me. I also remember national conventions filled with the excitement of traveling with friends, speakers and concerts.

My best memories, however, are sitting on the old couch in my advisor’s office in the shop. That was a home for me in high school — a safe place for me to start figuring out who I was. My advisor pushed me a lot in the conversations we shared. Of all the places I was able to travel and things I was able to do with FFA, when I think about it, that old couch is where I go.

Q: What was your career path after high school?

A: I attended Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Mo. I studied agricultural business

with an early plan of attending law school. The summer going into senior year, I interned with FCS Financial and took the LSAT (Law School Admission Test). I had a job offer at the end of the summer with FCS Financial, so I opted for a career there and haven’t looked back.

Q: Why did you choose your career?

A: I fell in love with people who farm and ranch for a living, and I wanted to serve them. I also wanted to work at a place where people cared about others, strived for excellence and had fun. I’ve had the blessing of being able to grow into roles at FCS Financial that fit who I am and what I can contribute.

Q: How do you serve your community and agriculture in your current role?

A: FCS Financial is driven by our member-owners, who are the

farmers and the ranchers we serve, so every decision prioritizes their well-being. Our cooperative’s commitment to community is also paramount. FCS Financial actively invests in giving back through dedicated programs, volunteer opportunities and strong support for 4-H, FFA and Agriculture Future of America.

Q: What is your advice for FFA members interested in agriculture-focused careers?

A: You don’t have to be the best at FFA for it to change your world. At the end of high school, it’s the experiences you had, the skills you developed and the relationships you made that matter most. Experiencing a variety of things can serve you better than trying to be the best in one area. I wasn’t the best at anything ever in my life, but I seek out ways to challenge myself, work hard and say “yes,” which has served me well.

MEDIA CENTER

ARTS & CULTURE IN AGRICULTURE

— By Lauren Quinlan

CHECK OUT WHAT'S NEW AND TRENDING IN AGRICULTURE MEDIA.

SOCIAL MEDIA



If you love engaging with others online and want to receive exclusive ShopFFA products throughout the year, look no further than the #FFAStyleSquad. Find and follow @shopffa_ on Instagram, then check out these five current squad members for additional inspiration.

@zoe_ffa

Tag along during Zoe Valencia's year of service as the 2025-26 New York FFA state president. Valencia is currently a senior at John Bowne High School.

@ethanl.23

Ethan Lopez shares his favorite moments from showing livestock and participating in events as an Oroquieta High School FFA member in California.

@calixto.citlali

Weld Central FFA Alumna Citlali Calixto advocates for agriculture as she recaps her time on the 2025-26 Colorado FFA state executive committee.

@todayis_kaden

Discover Kaden Ambers' experiences attending the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences and leading Section 8 of the Illinois FFA Association.

@abbys_ffa_journey

Dixie FFA Vice President Abbygael Whitehead lives in Florida. Dive into her perspective on FFA competitions and awards, news and updates, and more.

MOVIE

"Green and Gold"

Watch as a fourth-generation Wisconsin dairy farmer and his granddaughter battle to preserve their way of life in agriculture. The film, which hit theaters nationwide on Jan. 31, 2025, is part of Culver's Thank You Farmers Project and features a partnership with the Green Bay Packers football team.



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

An Abundant Guide

Coaching leadership development event competitors led Burns FFA Alumnus Hayden Hubbard to establish "An Abundant Guide," which offers interactive learning materials that have been used by nearly 100 agriculture educators nationwide. From Conduct of Chapter Meetings LDE flashcards to a "Podcasting 101" lesson, an FFA-themed "escape room" activity and more, the 2024-25 FFA in the USA reporter from Wyoming is continually developing resources that equip members and advisors to succeed in FFA.



FFA Moment 1930

In the 95 years since E.M. Tiffany first coined his now-iconic phrase, “I believe,” the FFA Creed has united FFA members, advisors, alumni and supporters in every corner of the country, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These five paragraphs represent the National FFA Organization’s values, time-honored history and traditions.

After being adopted at the third national convention, the Creed was revised at the 38th and 63rd conventions. Today, seventh through ninth-grade FFA members can compete in the Creed Speaking leadership development event, which challenges them to present the Creed from memory in an organized and professional manner, then answer a series of questions.

“Becoming a state champion FFA Creed speaker changed my life,” says Karly Anderson, a Pearland FFA member and 2024-25 FFA in the USA reporter from Texas. “Beyond earning a title, banner or recognition, I spent 15 months studying E.M. Tiffany’s words about how we can be the future of agriculture. The Creed continues to resonate with me as I learn to have a part in the ‘inspiring task’ he writes about.”



Karly Anderson committed countless hours to memorizing and presenting the FFA Creed — an effort that led her to take top honors in her state’s competition.

WE BELIEVE

Scan these codes to read the full FFA Creed (left) and watch special presentations by past national officers (middle) and in American Sign Language (right).



Full FFA Creed



National Officers



American Sign Language

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