

Lifesaving Labrador

– By Jodi Helmer

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

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

“They were the sweetest things ever,” she says.

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

“The owners of SIT Service Dogs were so surprised that a group of students and their idea generated so many donations for them,”

says Katrina Van Dyke, agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor.

Worthey plans to volunteer with the organization this summer.

She’ll take the dogs in training on excursions to parks and retail shops

to help them get used to different sights, sounds and smells.

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

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Ag News for Your Inbox

Former FFA member creates an email newsletter for agriculture.

– By Lauren Denton

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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