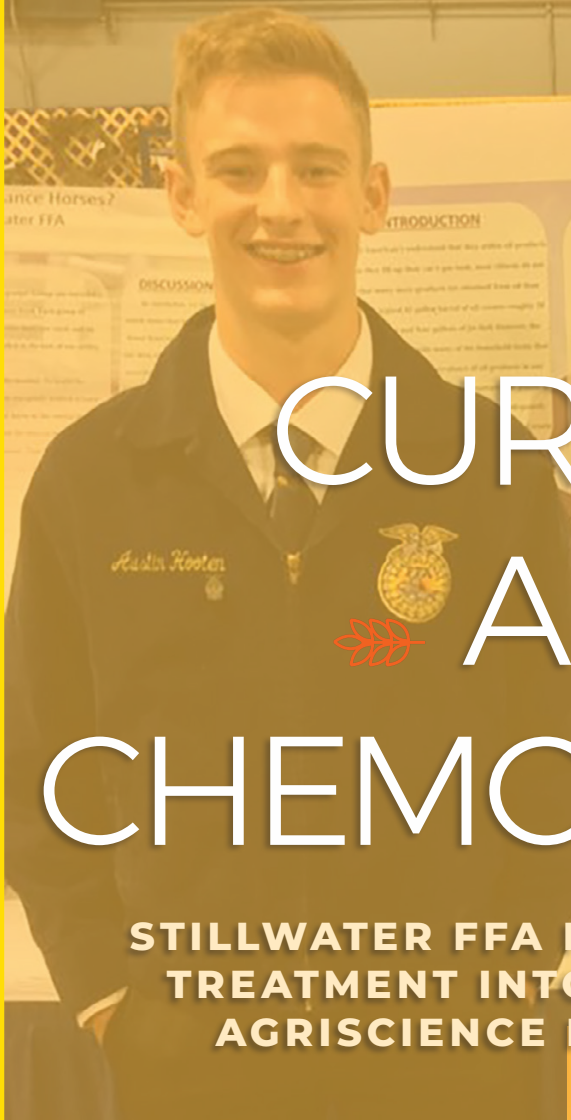


[PREMIER LEADERSHIP]



CURIOSITY AMID CHEMOTHERAPY

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



AGRISCIENCE RESEARCH -
INTEGRATED SYSTEMS



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

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

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

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

systems category at the Oklahoma FFA Agriscience Fair contest and first place at the National FFA Convention & Expo.

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

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

Hooten used the research from

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

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

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

agriscience research – integrated systems.

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

For Hooten, who has been in remission

since 2015 and plans to major in animal science and agribusiness at Oklahoma State University this fall, the experiences were also healing.

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

Learn more about participating in the agriscience fair at [FFA.org/Aggriscience-Fair](https://www.ffa.org/agriscience-fair).

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

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

