

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/.