

THE *feed*



LEADING THE CHARGE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

STUDENTS SHINE IN A HOT NEW PODCAST ABOUT A WARMING WORLD.

Christiane Maertens has one word for her initial attempt at creating a podcast focused on climate issues: Fail.

Although the North American Association for Environmental Education, the nonprofit behind the *Imagine If* podcast, had access to renowned climate scientists, the team, including executive producer and host Maertens, realized it lacked inspiration.

The solution: Talk to students who have experienced impacts of climate change and have found solutions in their communities. The *Imagine If* podcast produced five episodes in 2018. In the episode titled “What’s at Steak,” Bailey Morrell, third-generation cattle rancher and former Willows FFA member, talked to California Secretary of Food and Agriculture Karen Ross about the impact of drought and efforts to conserve water on her family farm.

“Giving these passionate young people an opportunity to have a voice that’s being taken seriously is really just awesome,” Maertens says.

“I want people [who are listening to the *Imagine If* podcast] to feel hopeful that there is so much good work happening out there. These students might not be solving climate change at the macro level, but when a listener can see how a student is doing impactful work on the micro level, it’s inspiring.”

— By Jodi Helmer

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Imagine If



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Convincing COTTON CYNICS

THIS FFA MEMBER PROVES NAYSAYERS WRONG BY SUCCESSFULLY GROWING COTTON IN NORTHERN MISSOURI.

Several people told Norborne FFA member Garrett Heil that he couldn’t grow cotton in northern Missouri’s Carroll County.

“I remember sitting in my middle school history class when I was 13 years old and learning about the Civil War and cotton production, and everyone said it was impossible to grow cotton this far north,” says Heil, currently a 17-year-old junior at Norborne High School in Norborne, Mo. “I told them I was going to grow it, and after a lot of research and hard work, I made it happen.”

Heil had a hard time finding cotton seed to plant, initially having to use seed from a discarded bag in a local warehouse, and his first crop was ruined in a flood. However, he wasn’t deterred; if anything, he only grew more determined.

“I started by planting just 5 acres of cotton on my family’s farm, C&N Heil Farms Inc., and since then, I’ve gotten up to as many as 130 acres,” Heil says. “Growing cotton not only has been a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) project for me, but also has been a way for me to generate an income after it’s been ginned and graded. Producing this crop has taught me that taking chances can really pay off, especially if you’re doing something you have a passion for.”

Thanks to Heil, cotton is now being grown in Carroll County for the first time in roughly 150 years, and he hopes to inspire other farmers in nearby communities — even those farther north — to follow suit.

“If you put your mind to something, you can almost always make it happen,” Heil says. “Nearly anything is possible if you have the right attitude.”

— By Jessica Walker Boehm



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