

HATS OFF TO THIS ALUM!

Manor FFA Alumnus Nate Jackson turned a love of cowboy hats into his dream career. - By Jodi Helmer

Nate Jackson still remembers the moment he got his first cowboy hat. "I never wanted to take it off," he says.

In Jackson's hometown of Manor, Texas, a cowboy hat is more than a fashion statement; it's a way of life.

Jackson had an entire collection of hats by the time he graduated high school; the Manor FFA Alumnus wore them to school and in the ring to show chickens. He also worked at Double R Hat House in Elgin, Texas, while pursuing an agricultural communications and journalism degree at Texas A&M University.

"I thought [getting that job] was the coolest thing ever," Jackson says. "The excitement of getting asked to do something I was interested in and learning more about it really sparked my passion for cowboy hats."

Jackson accepted a full-time position shaping hats for Double R Hat Ranch in 2021. The process involves steaming the hat to create different shapes and styles that are based on personal preferences and work environments.

"Some people say the way a hat is shaped can tell you where a person's from," Jackson says. "You can go to West Texas and see how their hats are shaped, then go up to Saskatchewan, Canada, and see that they have a different look."

Honing His Craft

It was a passion for storytelling that made Jackson stand out in the classroom.

"He's a genuine cowboy who loves to tell stories," says Holli Leggette, associate professor of agricultural communications and journalism at Texas A&M University. "I think that's part of what makes him special."

Jackson joined Texas A&M University's Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) chapter to meet more first-generation agriculture students. He also managed the chapter's social media account and served as its vice president, further honing his communication skills.

In 2023, Jackson launched a podcast, *Beneath the Hat*, to highlight stories of artists, cowboys and industry leaders. His most memorable guests were Dusty Green and Ricky Guerra,

modern cowboys who spend their days driving cattle on the range.

"People don't realize these guys still exist," Jackson says.

Whether it's talking with customers while shaping hats, interviewing podcast guests or sharing his own experiences, Jackson believes agriculture benefits from those who tell their stories.

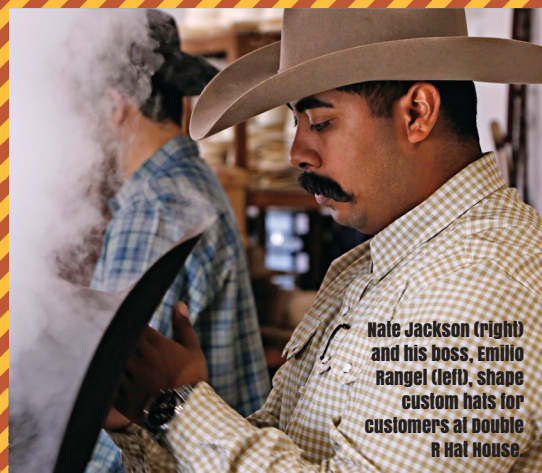
"We're in a place in our society where there are so many people from all kinds of backgrounds," he says. "Everybody is different. No matter who you are or where you come from, being yourself is the best thing somebody can do."

From his FFA roots to his current role at Double R Hat House, scan this code to watch a video about how Jackson paved his own path in agriculture.



Partnership With a Purpose

Since July 2023, the National FFA Organization and MANRRS have partnered to help ensure a brighter future for generations of agriculturists to come. To learn more about MANRRS and find a collegiate chapter near you, visit MANRRS.org.



Nate Jackson (right) and his boss, Emilio Rangel (left), shape custom hats for customers at Double R Hat House.