

FUTURISTIC FARMING

THIS MEMBER IS PURSUING AN AGRICULTURE CAREER THAT IS OUT OF THIS WORLD.

Growing up, Grant Lach spent a lot of time outside viewing meteor showers, comets and lunar and solar eclipses. The out-of-this-world experiences fueled his passion for space and led Lach, 19, to major in astronomy and astrophysics at Ohio State University.

Lach, who was a member of the Bloom Carroll FFA in Carroll, Ohio, ran for the state officer team. Earning a spot changed his career plans. The college sophomore recognized there were opportunities to pursue both agriculture and outer space with a career as a space farmer.



"NASA is investing \$1.6 billion in the Artemis Project to take people to the moon by 2024," he says. "Agriculture is the corner of civilization, and if we're intending to continue to colonize places beyond Earth, it's

important to figure out how to provide sustainable nutrition with limited resources on other planets."

Lach secured a coveted role on the social media team helping NASA promote its SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launch at Cape Canaveral. He hopes to make connections within the organization that will help him land a job after he graduates. He credits FFA with helping him identify a burgeoning career path.

"Being part of FFA and getting involved at deep levels opens your eyes to things other people might never know even existed," he says.

— By Jodi Helmer

GOLDEN FARMERS

AN FFA CHAPTER IN ILLINOIS CELEBRATES LOCAL FARMERS WHO'VE SPENT 50 YEARS IN THE FIELD.

An awards ceremony for farmers – that's what the Seneca FFA in Seneca, Ill., wanted to see. "In every other occupation, career milestones are marked with celebrations and gifts," says member Isaac Brockman. "Farmers, however, are never recognized for their longevity in a very challenging occupation."

FFA advisor Jeff Maierhofer's ag management class began talking about the idea, and "it just kind of morphed from there," Maierhofer says. The final plan: a Golden Farmers evening during National FFA Week 2019 honoring 16 farmers older than 70 who have been farming for more than 50 years. (One was 92 years old and still operating a combine.) The gift presented to each honoree read, "Farming: It's not just the way we make our living. It's the

way we make our life."

That sentiment is timeless. Even though decades and technological advancements separate the Seneca FFA members and their honorees, the level of commitment required remains the same. "You have to work hard and be dedicated to get the job done," Maierhofer says. "Hard work will never go away."

Neither will the pride. As the Golden Farmers tearfully shared their stories and answered FFA members' questions, "you could just see the pride these farmers had in their lives," Maierhofer says. "My students can't get that kind of emotion from a textbook."

Maierhofer says his chapter hopes to host similar events every five years, but he'd especially like to see other chapters follow suit to honor the Golden Farmers in their areas.

— By Lauren Denton

Members recognize farmers older than 70 who have been farming for more than 50 years.

