

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

As a recently chartered chapter, Weeping Water FFA launched Limestone Coffee Co., a student-run business venture, to raise funds and help members gain valuable skills. -By Lydia Johnson

Although agriculture is the largest industry in Cass County, Neb., Weeping Water High School didn't have an FFA chapter until the fall of 2022. Krystl Knabe was a 4-H club leader in the area at the time and had a background in agricultural education, so recruiting a group of members to join the newly chartered chapter came naturally to her.

"We had a teacher retire, and our school knew agriculture was important to our community," says Knabe, who began teaching at Weeping Water High School when the FFA chapter formed and now serves as its advisor. "They viewed this as an opportunity to offer classes about agriculture to our students."

Two years later, Weeping Water FFA now boasts nearly 40 active members, and the chapter focuses on serving its community and developing leadership skills through Limestone Coffee Co., a student-run coffee trailer.

A Business Is Born

In the spring of 2023, FFA members preparing for the district parliamentary procedure competition discussed owning and operating a coffee trailer. Long after they finished competing, this idea was still fresh on these students' minds.

"There aren't any coffee shops around here, so you'd have to drive at least 15 minutes to find one," says Katie Meyer, a Weeping Water FFA member and one of Limestone Coffee Co.'s student founders. "We saw this need in our community and came together to meet it."

With help from Knabe, members began evaluating the feasibility of starting this type of business venture. Putting their heads together, they sought to address questions such as "What will be on the menu?" and "What's our profit margin?" and "How will we market it?"

Once all factors had been taken into careful consideration, members presented a proposal to Knabe and the school's superintendent. After receiving approval from both individuals, the chapter officially launched Limestone Coffee Co.

Ideas Become Actions

A stainless-steel trailer was converted into a mobile coffee cart, which is parked at the school and can be easily transported to nearby community events such as the Lincoln Marathon.

After about six months of operation, profits from Limestone Coffee Co. provided funds for 17 Weeping Water FFA members to attend the 96th National FFA Convention & Expo in Indianapolis last fall.

"At the beginning, making sure it ran consistently was a struggle," Meyer says. "As time progressed, we learned so much about leadership and organization."

Lay the Foundation

Visit [FFA.org/Start-an-FFA-Chapter](https://www.ffa.org/Start-an-FFA-Chapter) to learn about how you can create an agricultural education program and FFA chapter in your area.



Weeping Water FFA members found a new purpose for a stainless-steel trailer by transforming it into their student-run business, Limestone coffee co.