

FFA – Living to Serve During WWII

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FFA During the War Years

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the country started to mobilize. Vocational agriculture and the Future Farmers of America were ready to help. The organization attained a new high in membership of 245,830 in 1942 in the 7,542 local chapters. Many of the instructors were volunteering for service in the armed forces and the war industries. It was necessary to close many of the vocational agriculture departments for the duration of the war. A gradual decline took place in FFA membership and in the number of chapters. By 1945 there were 196,253 FFA members in 6,030 chapters.

During the war years the national conventions were streamlined affairs. Only delegates and award winners attended, to economize on expenses and to make it possible for other members to participate in the war effort. The 1942 convention was attended by only 217 persons. The delegates revised the membership rules so that time in the armed forces would not count in determining a member's period of eligibility following graduation or leaving high school.

Future Farmers were active in their communities collecting scrap metal, rubber, and paper and were buying war bonds and helping sell additional bonds. Everywhere they were producing food, fiber and other agricultural products which were so urgently needed by their country and its allies.

Many of the older FFA members were in the armed forces. Eight former members were with General Wainwright when Bataan fell. One former member, William Gentry of Harrodsburg, Kentucky, was credited with leading the first tank battle on U.S. soil when ten U.S. tanks destroyed six Japanese tanks (December 31, 1941). Melvin Jordan of Oklahoma, Robert Gray of Texas, and Travis Hoover of California, all former FFA members, were with General Jimmy Doolittle and participated in the famous raid on Tokyo, April 18, 1942.

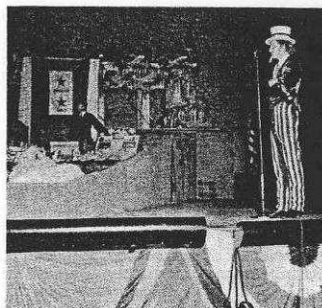
Future Farmer chapters that remained active during the war years had a big job to do and their record of achievement was outstanding. One of their major accomplishments was to build many thousands of pieces of farm



Many FFA members served in World War II. Captain Travis Hoover of California was with General Doolittle on the bombing of Tokyo in April 1942.



When the war was over the FFA paid tribute to war veterans in a special program at the Victory FFA Convention in 1946. Each of the Armed Services was represented by military personnel who had been members of the Shawnee-Mission, Kansas, FFA Chapter.



Patriotism and love for the nation have always been important to FFA members. Special ceremonies and pageants at the National FFA Convention have often been based on these patriotic themes.

equipment and machinery, and to repair countless farm machines that would have remained idle if there had not been vocational agriculture departments and FFA members to help.

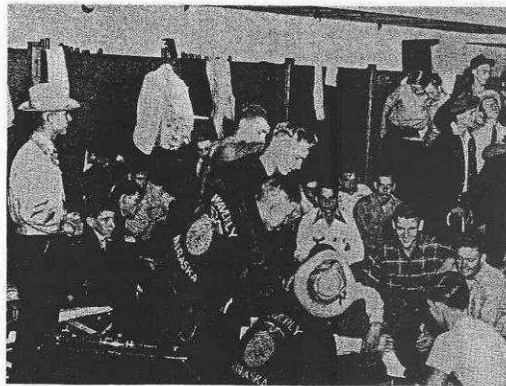
In 1943, W. A. Ross resigned as National Executive Secretary to assume another position in the Office of Education. S. C. Huslander served in his place from January to July, then returned to Pennsylvania. A. W. Tenney was called from Florida to serve as National Executive Secretary on July 7, 1943.

The conventions of 1943 and 1944 were also limited in size, with only the delegates and award winners present. After the surrender of Japan the delegates to the 1945 convention made plans for a Victory Celebration to be held in 1946.

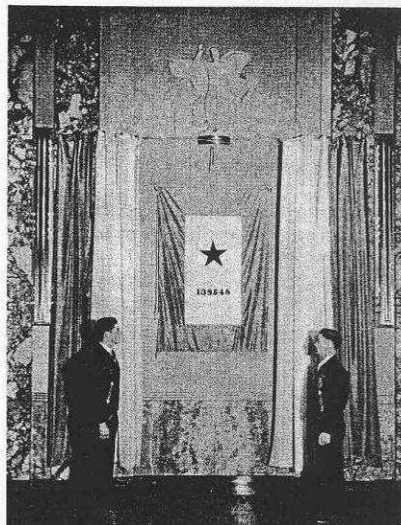
The Future Farmers of America Foundation, Incorporated, was formed in 1944 to provide funds for a comprehensive award program for FFA members and chapters. (Please refer to the chapter on the Foundation.) During the same year the delegates at the national FFA convention approved a budget of \$10,000 to employ a director of public relations and information for the national office, and to pay his secretarial and travel expenses.

DeWitt C. Wing served as Director of Public Relations for about six months, and was succeeded by William J. Huff. When Huff left in the spring of 1947 he was replaced by John Farrar, FFA Executive Secretary in Oklahoma.

The FFA service flag unveiled at the 17th National FFA Convention in 1944 showed the number of FFA members serving in the Armed Services in World War II.



The 1946 National FFA Convention was a jubilant occasion as Future Farmers gathered in Kansas City for the Victory Convention. So many attended that a "folding cot hotel" was created on the exhibition hall floor of the Municipal Auditorium to house members.



Victory Celebration Convention

With restriction on attendance eliminated there was great interest throughout the nation on attendance at the big Victory Convention in 1946. When more than 12,500 FFA members and their friends arrived in Kansas City it was necessary to make special housing arrangements. Cots were set up in empty warehouses and in other buildings to provide sleeping space for many FFA members. A special cafeteria was set up near the auditorium to help feed the big crowd.

It was announced at the convention that the FFA was again increasing in membership and was back to 206,104. A memorial program, honoring former members who served in the armed forces, was featured at the convention. As participants in the program marched to the platform they were preceded by a color guard, which was followed by each of the state FFA presidents bearing their state flag. The flags were used to form a background for the stage. Since that convention this flag ceremony has been used annually during the Star Farmer ceremony. Four representatives from each of the armed forces were on the platform and these former FFA members were saluted by the Pennsylvania State FFA Band and the Missouri State FFA Chorus.

A special report on the contributions of FFA members to the war effort for the five year period 1941 to 1946 was made by the executive secretary. The following items were included in that report:

1. Maturity value of War and Victory Bonds purchased by state associations	\$97,861
2. Maturity value of War and Victory Bonds and Stamps purchased by chapters and members	17,023,566
3. Maturity value of War and Victory Bonds and Stamps sold by chapters and members	18,415,126

4. Pounds of scrap metal collected by chapters	352,885,162
5. Pounds of paper collected by chapters	65,187,206
6. Bushels of rags collected by chapters	5,884,630
7. Number of burlap bags collected by chapters	1,694,767
8. Pounds of rubber collected by chapters	6,394,766
9. Members who lost their lives while serving in the armed forces	7,188
10. Acreage of victory gardens grown by members	111,261
11. Number of farm machines repaired by FFA members	621,900
12. Number of pieces of farm equipment constructed	292,369
13. Number of food conservation centers constructed and equipped with assistance of FFA Chapters	2,352
14. Number of No. 2 cans of food processed by chapters	12,233,033

The Victory Celebration Convention was a fitting climax to the distinguished service rendered by FFA members on the home front and throughout the world during the war years. The recognition of the services rendered by FFA can perhaps best be summarized by including a quotation from a telegram received at the 1943 national FFA convention:

The White House, Washington, D.C.
 "Congratulations to Future Farmers of America. Your work on the farm front is vital to our success on the battle-fronts of the world."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

The Impact of FFA - Living to Serve

The Impact of FFA

The FFA is a unique, vigorous organization of, by and for students who are enrolled in vocational agriculture to prepare for careers in agriculture and agribusiness. It was organized at a time when there was an urgent need for an organization to motivate and train rural youth to take pride in agricultural pursuits and provide a new positive leadership for rural communities and the Nation. The inspirational creed of the FFA, the sound structure it created to provide participation training, its challenging objectives, its motivating awards and its broad program of constructive activities enabled it to provide unusual service to youth, agriculture, agribusiness, local communities, the public secondary schools and government.

Impact on Youth

The FFA provided youth interested in agriculture opportunities to work together on programs which were of mutual interest. When the FFA was first organized many youth from farms and small rural communities who attended urban high schools felt insecure and inferior to the students from the cities. As they studied the importance of agriculture they began to develop a genuine pride for their rich rural heritage. They also started to utilize the sound training in leadership they were receiving in FFA by participating successfully in varied school activities. They gradually changed their own attitudes of themselves and influenced others to recognize their true abilities. A school principal in a large urban secondary school with a strong FFA chapter said he did not believe it was an accident that the presidents of the four classes were members of the FFA but that it was due to the practical program of leadership training they had been receiving in the FFA.

The FFA provided an opportunity for members to know, evaluate and train themselves. They have been motivated to develop goals for living and to plan a program to attain those goals. FFA degrees, stimulating awards and steady attainment in the FFA helped to start many youth on the road to lifelong achievement.

Rural youth were eager to belong to a large national organization that provided an opportunity for them to work with other youth in developing and carrying out a con-



President Jimmy Carter proudly recalls his experiences as an FFA member and secretary of the Plains FFA Chapter. Carter talked to Washington Conference participants during a visit to the White House.

structive program of activities. As they became members of FFA they learned that the organization was conducted by student members under the wise guidance of teachers of vocational agriculture who served as advisors of local chapters.

Many members were thrilled to learn, when they joined the FFA, that they had an opportunity to work with other members on many important projects that were of service to others. This strengthened their pride in the organization and provided deep personal satisfaction.

As members advanced in the FFA they were given opportunities to assist in training new members, who enrolled at the beginning of each new term of school. Many FFA youth leaders used the training they had received in their chapter to inform and assist youth in elementary schools and in organizations such as 4-H Clubs, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

Many youth in rural communities, who were not old enough to enroll in high school, observed the stimulating activities of FFA chapters and were motivated to learn

Impact on Organizations

Leaders and members of many organizations recognize the FFA as an excellent training laboratory for youth who may later become members and leaders of those organizations. As FFA members develop leadership abilities and self-confidence they become more effective members of other organizations. The training FFA members receive by serving on committees, helping develop programs of activities, working with others to implement the programs, and by serving as chapter officers prepares them to frequently advance quickly in other organizations when they leave the FFA. One of the largest local Granges in an eastern state had as its Master a 21-year-old young man who was a former president of the local FFA chapter. Members and former members of FFA have been found participating actively in farm organizations, service clubs, cooperatives, churches and other groups in the community and state.

Agricultural cooperatives provide special educational programs to motivate FFA members to become members and provide leadership in the cooperative movement.

The education and experience FFA members receive in leadership is of great value to them as they work together in the organization. Many members find that this training is of even greater value after they complete school and take active roles in many adult organizations.



Impact on Government

Through the years FFA members have become involved in governmental affairs on local, state and national levels. Because of their leadership activities in FFA a few members have been elected to the local school board while they were still enrolled in high school. Doyle Conner, former national president of the FFA and now Commissioner of Agriculture in Florida, was elected to serve as speaker of the House of Representatives in Florida when he was 25 years of age. Many former members serve in their state legislatures, become Governors or other state officials. So many former members have been elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate of the Federal Government that an informal FFA chapter has been organized by these persons. The chapter meets annually while the national FFA officers are in Washington, D.C.

Two of the candidates for President of the United States in 1976 spoke with pride of their participation in the FFA while they were in high school. They were Fred Harris of Oklahoma and Jimmy Carter of Plains, Georgia. Jimmy Carter won the election and became the first former FFA member to be elected President of the United States.

Perhaps the greatest impact of FFA on government is the emphasis given to patriotism and good citizenship by the organization throughout the United States. This emphasis has helped develop a pride in government and a desire by members to obey laws, take an active part in governmental affairs and serve government as requested by their neighbors.

Congressional leaders in both the House and Senate have given wholehearted support to the FFA and have always taken time to visit with National Officers. In 1965 Speaker of the House John McCormick (center) met with the officer team.

Impact on Rural Communities

FFA members and the local chapter play a significant role in their local community. For many years the FFA, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has conducted a significant community improvement program. Chapters are motivated to study their community and implement programs which are designed to improve the community and make a more wholesome life for the residents.

Many chapters sponsor camping programs, athletic teams, community clean-up and paint-up programs and activities to conserve the natural resources in the area. Local chapters frequently cooperate in programs which involve more than one community. Sometimes they work through their state FFA association. Since 1953 FFA members in 260 secondary schools in Minnesota raised more than \$750,000 from corn drives for "Camperships" and facilities for handicapped children at Camp Courage, operated by the Minnesota Society for Crippled Children and Adults. Part of the contribution was used to help construct an \$80,000 Speech Therapy Building, a greenhouse on Camp Courage grounds, sponsorship of travel camping programs and instruction in horticulture.



FFA chapters across the United States were encouraged to join in the celebration of the nation's 200th birthday in 1976 by participating in FFA programs and activities that were part of FFA's Celebrate '76 project. Participating chapters were recognized at the 1976 National FFA Convention.

The FFA has served as an organization in which youth enrolled in vocational agriculture can participate in constructive community programs and cooperate with other organizations in the community in their activities. Youth who become involved in such wholesome community projects and are taught the high ideals of the FFA are not inclined to become involved in crime or programs which are detrimental to their neighbors or the community.

As they sponsor safety programs they develop a respect for law when they study how to operate automobiles and farm equipment on the highways. Chapters sponsor instruction in the use of firearms, since many members hunt the game on their farms.

When members study their community and help develop programs to improve it they develop a pride in their community and in their way of life. Their pride and constructive community building programs influence others to cooperate in such programs and become proud of their community.



Dr. Esco Hall Jr. of Alamo, Georgia, was an NFA National Officer when the NFA merged with the FFA. He recalls his experiences in NFA and FFA as the challenge that helped him succeed in achieving an education in veterinary medicine and in establishing himself in a thriving veterinary practice near his home community.

FFA - Living to Serve Through BOAC

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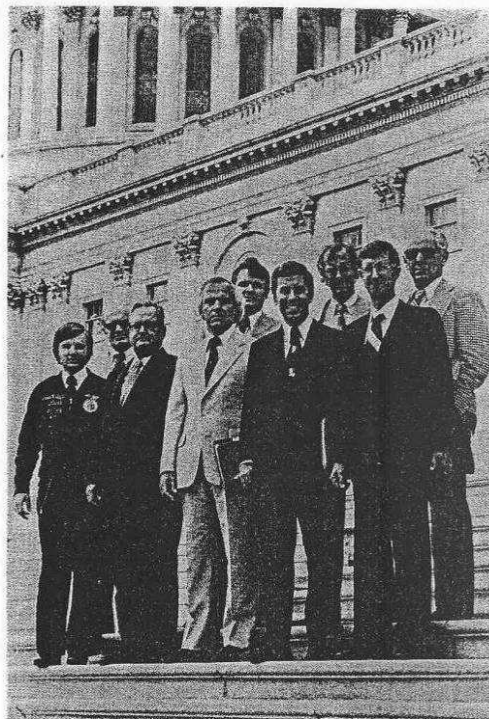
Building Our American Communities

The FFA adopted a program in 1971 to involve FFA members in improving American communities. Some of the community improvement activities in which FFA chapters have been involved include creating, expanding, and upgrading job opportunities; providing adequate community facilities; making better housing available; improving the environment through land use planning, zoning, and the development of programs to make available clean air and water; developing recreation facilities; and people building, with emphasis on education, manpower development and spiritual training. This program is conducted in close cooperation with the Farmers Home Administration of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

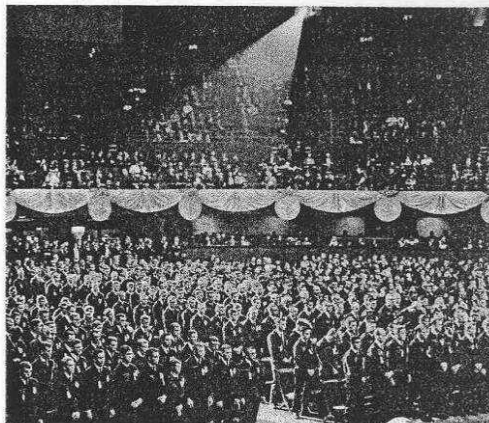
Awards have been provided for local chapters to present to individuals or groups actively involved in the program. In addition area, state and national awards have been provided by the FFA Foundation. Chapters are rated Gold, Silver or Bronze Emblem. Each of the four regional winners is awarded a check for \$200 from the FFA Foundation.

In 1976 a comprehensive instructional unit was developed titled "Community Development FFA Style." This reference with its accompanying teachers' plan has been designed to enable students to study the community development process. These units and accompanying audio-visuals were introduced to the states through a series of five National workshops conducted during the summer of 1976.

American Farmer Degree candidates are recognized in a special ceremony prior to being presented their degree.



Official judges who select the winner of the National BOAC award include government and business leaders.



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FFA - Living to Serve Through Food For America

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Food for America

Making people more aware of the importance of agriculture and agribusiness has always been a goal of the FFA. Across the nation FFA Chapters have actively worked to tell the story of American Agriculture through exhibits at fairs, children's barnyards, and other local public relations programs.

In 1975 the National FFA Organization responded to the need expressed by FFA chapters for materials that could be used in educating the public about agriculture. The Food for America program launched in 1975 was designed to help FFA chapters tell the story of agriculture. Materials developed for the program are aimed at elementary school children at the second, third and fourth grade levels and include a film, a Farm Art Book, a lesson plan, posters and suggestions for other exhibits and demonstrations.

FFA Chapters presenting the Food for America program are encouraged to first conduct a class on agriculture, explaining modern farming and agribusiness and showing the film. After the classroom sessions FFA chapters are encouraged to host field trips to farms or bring livestock to the school so that children can see live animals and become more familiar with the operation of a farm.

The Food for America program has been an outstanding success. In its first year of operation more than a thousand FFA Chapters participated in the program. In following years more chapters participated and a high percentage of chapters that conducted the Food for America program the first year were invited to give it in even more schools the following year.

The Food for America program has been beneficial in several ways. First it gives FFA members an opportunity to use leadership skills by organizing a program and communicating with others. The program has helped educate children and adults about agriculture and it has provided career education to elementary school children by showing them some of the job opportunities in modern agriculture and agribusiness.



The Food for America Program involves FFA members in activities to tell elementary students how farmers produce food and fiber.

humble beginning during the early days of vocational agriculture and the FFA to large, constructive developments which recognize outstanding achievements of FFA members and chapters. The motivating influence of awards and contests sponsored by FFA has had a wholesome influence upon FFA members, chapters, state associations, the public schools, agriculture, local communities and government.

Many publications have been prepared about the award and contest programs. These are available from Robert A. Seefeldt and Ted Amick, FFA Program Specialists at the National FFA Center. (For additional information about the program of the FFA Foundation please see the chapter on the Foundation.)

The following is a list of FFA Contests, Awards and other special projects, the date they were initiated, and



FFA - Living to Serve Through Seeds of Hope

The National FFA Organization has launched Seeds of Hope, a fundraising campaign to rebuild agricultural education and FFA programs in the Gulf Coast states of

Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida hit hard by Katrina. An estimated 120 FFA chapters and schools, 5,000 FFA members and their families, and about 150 agricultural education teachers have experienced severe

damage or total destruction to their homes, facilities and school projects, including human and personal property loss.

Through Seeds of Hope, your FFA chapter can help rebuild these programs and provide encouragement to help these FFA members get their chapters and school program back on their feet.

Kubota Tractor Corporation Donates Utility Vehicles and Power Generators to Rebuild Hurricane-Damaged FFA Chapters

INDIANAPOLIS - The National FFA Foundation announced that Kubota Tractor Corporation is donating 15 RTV900 utility vehicles and five portable commercial electric power generators to the Seeds of Hope campaign to help rebuild the agricultural education programs and assist FFA chapters in disaster relief efforts in five Gulf States hit hard by hurricanes in 2005.

[Read the full press release here.](#)

Contributions raised at the 2005 National FFA Convention

\$528,024



[Click here for alist of Contributors.](#)

News & Stories from our Chapters

It's difficult to comprehend the staggering destruction to Gulf Coast communities left in Katrina's wake. Here you'll find inspiring accounts shared by those whose lives were torn apart and others who are answering their calls for help.

- [Current News & Releases](#)
- [Stories from our Chapters & Members](#)

Affected Chapters

Some 120 FFA chapters were impacted by the hurricane. As we receive news, they will be listed here along with any status update. To communicate with a chapter, please first contact NAAE or visit their website, <http://www.naae.org/>

- [Alabama](#)
- [Florida](#)
- [Louisiana](#)
- [Mississippi](#)

The Seeds of Hope Campaign

National FFA President Jackie Mundt has issued the challenge to FFA Chapters across the United States to raise funds to rebuild agricultural education/FFA programs. This section contains useful information and resources to launch your local fundraising campaign.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) Now available with or without music.

- [Campaign Resources](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)