



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

July



July was a month of great excitement. I was home in Wisconsin for the 4th of July celebration. I was excited to have a chance to be home for the festivities in Pittsville including the Heart and Sole Road Race and the parade. My family and friends built a float in my honor and I truly appreciated their hard work.

On the fifth it was on the road again. West Virginia was the last stop I made on the state convention tour. This convention is unique because it is held at a camp. The convention is

known for the flag raising and lowering ceremony that the state officers perform everyday. One highlight from this convention was a chance to meet West Virginia's Commissioner of Agriculture, Gus Douglass. Mr. Douglass is the longest serving Commissioner of Agriculture in the country. He found his start in FFA and served as the National FFA President. It was very inspirational to see how far a former FFA member has gone.

My next stop was Wagoner, Oklahoma for the State Alumni Camp. This experience was unique because I had the chance to be a participant. I was disguised as a high school FFA member and participated in the conference until it was time for my workshop. As I was revealed the participants whom I had become friends with were completely shocked. It was fun to get to know students without a title controlling their behavior. It gives them a chance to see that I am a real person.

After two weeks of fun and leadership development at camps it was time for a complete shift in setting. I headed to Indianapolis for the first time in months with much excitement for the chance to see my teammates. Our July Board of Directors meeting was filled with choices that will really affect the future of our organization. We set our key strategic priorities for the next five years, as well as gave the okay for staff to continue to capitalize on and develop our Lifeknowledge program.

After the board meeting our team were worn out. Most of the team had been on the road for several months. So we had two days to regroup. Part of the group joined me for a trip to my home in Wisconsin. We checked out the local highlights and spent time catching up on sleep and doing laundry.

Our month ended with one of the biggest events of our year. The only conference we present as a team is State Presidents' Conference (SPC). SPC is a chance for two state officer's from every state to come to Washington, D.C. for a week and learn about our country and take a leadership role in our national convention's delegate process. The week is very special to us as officer's, because our families are invited to attend as well. Other than national convention it is the only time this year that they get a chance to see us in action.

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Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

Our theme for SPC was Cultivate the Experience. We hoped that the participants would take what they saw or experienced and bring it home to their own state and continue to make an impact on the people around them. One of the most unique experiences that we were able to cultivate was a visit with both the Secretary of Agriculture and the President of the United States of America. We met with Secretary Johanns in the Whitten Patio at the USDA and he shared with us how FFA had been his first opportunity to get involved in public speaking. Our visit with President Bush took place in the State Dining room at the White House. President Bush exceeded my every expectation. He was a kind man who spoke from the heart and was very candid and forthright with us. He openly shared with us both positive and negative experiences in his life. I was very moved by his comments and honored to have his attention for a half hour. This past month has been filled with so many once in a life-time experiences. When I think about where I am in my life I am humbled by the places I have been and people I have meet.

June

This past month has easily been my favorite month of the year. The month took me from coast to coast and involved everything from speaking and presenting to spending quality time with state officers and FFA members.

North and South Carolina ended up with a sad deal in the fact that they had to share my time for there conventions. Neither state was excited to do this but they both were determined to show me true southern hospitality. North Carolina holds their convention at North Carolina State University. During my short time there, I had a chance to reconnect with a member of the nominating committee who selected my team. It was interesting to be on the other side of the table. It was so funny to see that the mysterious person who had drilled me during interviews was just like all other state officers and looked up to our team. The time I spent with Justin really humbled me. South Carolina was another great experience. I had a chance to be the guest interviewer during their state officer elections. It was really neat to see the responses of the candidates when I asked them about what issues they saw facing their state FFA as well as their goals for their team during the year. As an added bonus one of the newly elected state officers took me on a trip to Clemson Universities Dairy Unit.

From the Carolina's I flew up to Washington, D.C., to attend the ending of the opening session of Washington Leadership Conference (WLC). WLC is a conference presented by national FFA staff in Washington, D.C., that focuses on service, leadership, and citizenship. The most unique part of the conference takes place on the last day when all of the students work together in a service project. We had a chance to work with a DC area gleaning project and do a second harvest of collards. During the week I met FFA members from all over the country and saw some friends from back home in Wisconsin. The energy and enthusiasm from the members is unlike anything I have ever seen. WLC has been my favorite experience of the whole year.



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

Wisconsin State FFA Convention was my next stop. It is said that your home convention will be the hardest event you participate in during your year of service and I would agree. You have the advantage of knowing all the in's and out's of convention but everyone knows you and there is a higher level of expectation. To my surprise though I found myself more interested in seeing the state officer team and other FFA members succeed than caring about what people thought of my performance. With the stress of performance shifted I saw something that again humbled me. I saw so many people in the state of Wisconsin who support me. For that I am truly thankful. I had two really unique experiences at convention that most national officers are not privileged to. I was able help present a charter, which is signed by the National Advisor and President as well as the State Advisor and President, to the new Bayfield FFA chapter. The other privilege I had was addressing the Wisconsin State Assembly at the open of an Assembly session. I appreciate the work of Speaker John Guard and Representative Amy Sue Vruwink who made this opportunity available to me.

From Wisconsin I headed to Arkansas to meet up with my teammate Rachael to present our first National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSO). This is one of the trainings National FFA is able to provide state officers; it is the only training that we as national officers facilitate. We explore what it means to be a team and the many tasks that lie ahead in a year as a state officer. Arkansas conference was held at Campcouchdale, with Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana in attendance. The camp created a great atmosphere for the conference. NLCSO is a good time because we get a chance during the week to really build a lasting relationship with FFA members and have some fun.

From Arkansas Rachael and I headed to Oregon to present NLCSO for Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and California. This conference was held in a high school cafeteria so we had to work harder to create the environment than we did in Arkansas. However we were much less nervous after presenting the conference once so we were able to relax and get into the experience.

June is busiest month during our year however it has been my favorite. I have been rejuvenated by the FFA members and events across the country. It still amazes me what experiences are involved in this year and how everyday passes more quickly than the day before. It is a bittersweet thought that National FFA Convention is less than four months away.

May

May began for me in Columbus Ohio at "The Ohio State University" for the State FFA convention. A new test presented itself for me in Ohio as the Sponsors Board Chairman (Dr. Dwight Armstrong), the National FFA COO (Doug Loudenslager) and the national officer team manager (Mark Wilburn) were all in the audience. At first I was a bit nervous because of this but I soon found that it would indeed be another opportunity for growth. I was nearly to the half way point for the state convention season and I was able to receive valuable feedback on how I can continue to improve as a presenter and speaker. Something else interesting about Ohio's convention was my ride. Everyday I had the



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

chance to ride in "The Corn Car." The Ohio Corn Grower's Association sponsors a car that runs on E85 (85% ethanol blended gasoline) for the state president to drive. The blue Taurus is decorated with an FFA emblem and travels all over the state during the year.

From Ohio I headed to College Station, TX home of Texas A&M and the Aggies. The entire national officer team and several members of our staff were in Texas for a dress rehearsal for the National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSSO). We spent our first week in Texas working with Mark Reardon, a facilitator trainer who works with teachers and presenters to help them make their presentations fun and engaging. Learning to be a good facilitator required us to focus not on our participants but on the students that our participants will eventually influence. It's not about us doing a good job or our participant's level or enjoyment. We found that our focus had to be making sure that the officers we work with not only understand everything we are teaching but that they are able to use it when they are working with FFA members during their year of service. Our goal is to influence through our successors, ensuring a continual future for our organization. Everything that we learned to do made great sense but was hard to implement because we all have habits as presenters that need to be corrected. I ended up having many days of frustration because I was doing things incorrectly and I knew it. The second week in Texas was time to practice what we preach. A&M has a leadership class that lends us students to participate in a trial run of the conference. The group of mostly college juniors and seniors take on the role of state officers for four days as we present the conference to them. We work in pairs for NLCSSO; I am partnered up with Rachael. During this week we present in the mornings and work for the rest of the day with our coach to make improvements and set up for the next day's activities. This week was one of the most exhaustive weeks I have ever experienced. It required everything that all six of us had to get up everyday and present in front of students who were our own age and implement everything we were learning to make the conference. In the end it proved to be a great week where we all grew tremendously and gained the confidence we need to present this conference for state officers.

From Texas I headed home to get some much needed mental and physical rest. While I was home I had a chance to attend the Alice in Dairyland Finals in Medford. I also proudly watched my mom graduate from Mid-State Technical College as a registered nurse.

After my short time at home I headed to Aurora, NE. I attended a session of the Chapter Officer Leadership Training (COLT). This was one of my favorite events of the year. It is a week where teams of chapter officers grow together and plan to make their chapter better. The conference was presented by Nebraska's newly elected state officers. It was very impressive to see how hard they worked to get ready to present this conference in such a short time. The conference also included ample time for recreational activities. My favorite was a wild and crazy Survivor like flashlight relay and the time that I was able to spread Wisconsin culture by teaching the participants to Polka. After the conference ended, my brother Doug, who lives just north of Omaha, picked me up and I



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

spent Memorial Day weekend with him. It was a nice perk of my traveling to be able to visit.

My final stop for the month was in Auburn, AL for the Alabama state convention. The convention was a nice mixture of honoring students and good entertainment. Alabama has a set of competitions that are quite unique. They have a quartet and string band competition. These students are some of the most musically talented people I have ever seen and they don't take competition lightly. The groups would battle any cover band I have ever seen.

As May wrapped up and June began I realized that my schedule is only going to get more intense. I am looking forward to the remainder of state conventions, the start of NLCSO's and our State Presidents' Conference this July.

April

I love state FFA conventions. They are definitely one of my favorite parts of serving as a national officer.

California's state convention was the first stop on my trip last month. The convention is held in Fresno with the help of Fresno State University, which makes it a great agricultural location. Their convention is one of the largest with about 5,000 members, advisors and guests in attendance. This isn't too shocking considering that they have over 63,000 FFA members. In California if you are enrolled in an agriculture class you automatically become an FFA member. Their convention is very well done. It is a lot like National FFA convention. They have great speakers, lots of workshops and the best kick-off session I have seen yet. During this session the state officers arrived in Cadillac's, Jeeps and 4-wheelers to be followed by pyrotechnics and an awesome laser show. The energy and enthusiasm that those sessions produce are amazing. My favorite part of convention was hanging out with some awesome members in the Extemporaneous Speaking Contest holding room.

My next stop was in Georgia. I attended convention as a guest to see my teammate Rachael give her keynote address in her home state. Georgia's was really nice because I only gave remarks two times. The rest of the convention I had a chance to step back and watch my teammate shine as "the National Officer." The biggest disadvantage I found in Georgia was the temperature. It was about 90 degrees with 80% humidity. That may be a bit of a stretch but it was weather that I don't normally see until July. The state staff in Georgia tried to make it up to me by feeding my addiction for desserts. From Georgia I returned to a familiar climate. I attended Minnesota's state convention in the Twin Cities. My favorite compliment from the week was, "It is so nice to have a national officer we can understand, we normally get ones from down south and we can't understand a word they say." I did appreciate the time with neighbors even if I did have to stand alone as a Packer Fan.

At all of these conventions I had a great opportunity to just hang out with FFA members and meet people. That is what makes conventions awesome for me. Making friends, listening to stories of success, giving encouragement and seeing what FFA is doing for



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

all who are involved in it. The hardest part of conventions for me has become the last session where most states announce their new state officer teams. Throughout the week I usually get to know all of the candidates really well. It is so hard to look at a member who has just lost a race for their dream and tell them that they did their best. It makes me think of my own position. I know that there are at least 35 FFA members who would have given anything to do what I am doing. I guess that is part of what makes my year such an honor. It is very humbling.

My final stop was in Indianapolis for the National FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board meeting. The sponsor's board is made up of about 30 individuals who are influential and usually high ranking business people in the agriculture industry. The board works to continue increasing contributions to the National FFA Foundation from companies and individuals. All of the major sponsors of FFA are represented on this board as well as other long time friends of the organization. I attended a banquet that was held at the National FFA Center. I had a chance to mix and mingle with the attendees as well as speak about the duty that we all share in ensuring the future of agriculture. I found it a bit ironic that in a room full of the most powerful and successful executives in our industry, they were excited to meet me. That was very cool. That helps me to know how highly they really regard this organization.

I have attended four of the ten conventions I have been assigned. At the end of April my team celebrated its six month anniversary and I feel like I have really just started. I can't believe that we are over half way done with our year. I guess time really does fly when you are having fun.

April 22, 2005

This last month started off with a trip to Boise, Idaho, with my teammate Brian for our second week of B&I tours. In Idaho we met with a feedlot company and the JR Simplot Company. Then we headed to California and visited with companies from San Francisco down to San Diego. The perk of doing B&I's in California and driving to all of your visits is that you get to see the beautiful sights. We took scenic route 1 down the coast. It was filled with breath taking views and tourist traps. \$3.59/gal for gas was the going rate in a little tourist town. It was the only gas for miles though and we fell into the trap like so many others do. We also got to soak up some of the warm sun in San Diego and stopped by the Zoo in our free time. In the end it was more like a vacation than a business trip because the visits were good and the sights were even better.

I flew from warm San Diego into Madison on a snowy Friday night. That definitely made me feel like I had come back to reality. . My week of time at home was no vacation. I was home to attend the Pittsville FFA banquet but that was just the start of my week. I spoke at the 75th anniversary banquet for the Neillsville FFA and as a guest speaker for the staff at the Marshfield Clinic Farm Medicine Center. I was able to attend Farm Bureau's Ag Day at the Capitol and Made for Excellence/EDGE conference hosted by the Wisconsin FFA in Eau Claire. I spent more time around the state then I did in central Wisconsin.

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Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

Ag Week in D.C., was my first stop when I left home. Three of my teammates (Brian, Justine, and Rachael) and I spent the week building partnerships with government agencies and professional associations. Some of our visits included job shadows at the United States Department of Agriculture, visits with the Departments of Energy and Labor, and a meeting with the Chief State School Officers Association.

Each state is guaranteed a visit from a national officer during their convention. At the convention national officers perform a variety of duties such as: keynote addresses, leadership workshops, and mingling with FFA members. Utah's state FFA convention was my first convention stop for the year. Their convention is held in Logan at Utah State University. While I was there I gave a keynote speech, presented workshops and was adopted by chapters for all of my meals. I loved getting the chance to hang out with members. It is funny to me that after four and

a half months in office I received my first real opportunity to meet FFA members. I also had a chance to get a little crazy in Utah. When I arrived in Utah I found out that someone had dropped out of the talent show and they were in need of a performer. I told them "never fear I can fill five minutes." So I headed to Wal-Mart and bought myself a CD and the best disco outfit I could find in a half an hour. In the talent review I went on as 'the Disco Diva.'

I used disco moves to demonstrate how applesauce is made. (I must give credit here. I learned to disco and got the idea from "the Disco Studs" and FFA talent group from Oconto Falls.) I called my performance "Staying Alive: Agriculture Literacy Style." Everyone in the audience got into it and it turned out to be a big hit. I ended up with an encore performance at the dance the next night. Utah's convention has been the highlight of my year thus far.



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The next week found me in Indianapolis with my team for our catalog photo shoot. Over the course of two days my five teammates and I took 2,000 pictures. I felt like a super model by the end of the second day. I had a really unique situation arise during some work time at the center. A group of FFA members were at the FFA center interviewing for a scholarship to Washington Leadership Conference (WLC). I happened to run into them while I was getting some office work done. I wasn't in official dress because we usually wear business casual around the FFA center. I started a conversation with the students and one of them asked me, "What do you do around here anyway?" At that I laughed and told them that I was a national officer. They were very excited by that news. It was really cool to have a conversation with the students when they didn't know who I was. They got to know me as a person not as a position. I hope

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Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

to have more meetings like that this year. They later invited Rachael and me to their banquet that weekend. We were both in town so we decided to go. Sometimes the best events happen because of a chance meeting. It was a lot of fun to go to a banquet and remember why we do what we do. FFA members are so talented and banquets showcase those talents.

That brings me to the last week of this journal. The whole team was back in Indianapolis to work on preparations for our National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSO.) It amazes me how intense our work sessions can be. We work from 8 a.m. to midnight or later some days. During that time we intake an incredible amount of information, listen to experts and tryout some of the activities for the events we are planning. Workweeks are stressful but I love them because I get to see my team. After that training I had two small events. The first was a Business and Industry visit with BAYER in North Carolina. From North Carolina I flew back to Wisconsin and headed to Manawa. In Manawa I visited with the school's administration and presented a workshop for Mrs. Cordes's classes. I am starting to see that this job is a little like being a chameleon. You never know what job you will take on salesman, teacher or model. .

March 28, 2005

Next up on my schedule: Utah State Convention, FFA Blue Catalog Photo Shoot, NLCSO Test Pilot

One thing that I appreciate about this year is the people that I get a chance to meet. They all have a story to tell and a unique personality. The last month has been filled with Business & Industry Visits, National FFA Week, and a national officer work week. Business & Industry Visits (B&I's) are an opportunity for the national officer team to build partnerships for FFA. During our year we spend at least three weeks traveling with representatives of the National FFA Foundation. We visit potential sponsors, individual supporters and current sponsors of the National FFA Organization. Each visit is an opportunity for us to sit down and visit with our supporters. Businesses and individuals share information about their companies, the trends and of our national economy and insight on what they look for from upcoming employees. As national officers we use this as a chance to introduce businesses to FFA and to give them an update on what is going on with our students. We also collect information to share with our members about career opportunities and what employers are looking for.

It is tradition to Kick-off the first round of B&I's with the National FFA Foundation Sponsor's Board Chairperson. (The National FFA Foundation Sponsor's Board is a group of over 30 prominent agricultural business leaders who lead the foundations yearly fundraising campaign.) Dr. Dwight Armstrong, CEO of North American Nutrition Companies (NANCO), in Lewisburg, Ohio, is the current chairman. Dr. Armstrong and his wife hosted all six of us for a weekend to help us get ready for our visits. We had a chance to meet with key players in many of NANCO's subsidiary companies such as: Sunglow, Akey, and Vigortone.

Dr. Armstrong and his wife Judy were great hosts to us while we were in the Dayton area. One day they took us to a Dayton Bombers hockey game where we met the mascot, Bucky the Squirrel, and participated in the "chuck a puck" contest. It was a full hockey experience because the game was called with a little over a minute left because

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Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

all of the players had been thrown out of the game for fighting. The next day we toured the Air Force Museum and Aviation hall of fame. That night the Armstrong's held a reception in our honor at the Packard Car Museum. Business leaders from the agriculture industry in Ohio and NANCO employees were in attendance. It was really neat to have a chance to see one of a kind Packard cars that were on display. The best part of the whole weekend was having a chance to learn about Dr. Armstrong's past and the business philosophy he uses in life.

For B&I's we are partnered up with one other officer. For the first week I was working with Brian Hogue, National FFA Western Region Vice President from Arizona. Brian and I had a chance to visit with some of our strongest partnerships. We spent part of our week in Detroit, Mich., with Ford Motor Company and Chevrolet. The second half of our week was in North Carolina with Syngenta, BASF and Bayer Cropscience. One of the highlights and surprises of the week for me was having the opportunity to sit down with the General Manager of Chevrolet, Brett Dewar. This year will mark the 60th anniversary of Chevrolet's sponsorship of FFA. Mr. Dewar spent more than thirty minutes extra with us discussing his excitement for FFA. His staff finally had to come and drag him out of our meeting. It was very cool to see a man with that much on his plate truly devoted to FFA. The first week of B&I's was a success and I look forward to another week of them later this month.

National FFA Week sends most of the officers out on their own to celebrate with state associations and chapter members. I worked for the week with my teammate Emily Horton, National FFA Secretary from Wyoming. We started the week with a pancake breakfast at the National FFA Center in Indianapolis. The breakfast was put on by FFA members from the Star Academy in Indianapolis. After a short time at the breakfast we headed Nashville, Tenn., for "FFA Live in '05" a RFD-TV program. Orion Samuelson hosted this two hour program that looked at what is going on in FFA and how our students "LEARN, LEAD, SUCCEED!" During the show we were told to ignore the cameras or monitors and just have a conversation with Orion. That is a lot harder said than done. It was funny to see a look of realization come across my face like a person at a sporting event who realizes they are on the big screen.

Emily and I flew to Washington, D.C., to spend the remainder of our week on Capitol Hill. Congress was in recess so we were unable to meet any Congress people but we did visit with their staff. In two days we did seventeen visits. Our visits were to inform staff that it was FFA week and to be advocated for Carl D. Perkins Vocational Funding. Perkins funding is used for the support of Career and Technical Education (CTE), which was once referred to as vocational education. Agricultural education falls under CTE and FFA programs are dependant on agricultural education. Perkins funding helps to support teacher professional development, technology upgrades and state leadership to provide support for agriculture education. Without this funding our FFA programs would severely suffer. In the president's budget this money was zeroed out. More information on the Perkins legislation can be found at www.naae.org. It is important that we make it clear to our representatives how important it is to support agriculture education. During these visits we were active advocates for the future of our organization.

After FFA week my teammates and I loaded up into vans and headed to Michigan to get away for a week filled with growth and training to help us prepare for what is to come in our year. We spent the week at Big Rock Valley which is part of the Edward Lowe



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

Foundation. Edward Lowe was the inventor of kitty litter. He established a foundation and wildlife preserve that includes several conference facilities. We stayed in Billieville which is made to look like a Midwest town in the late-nineteenth century. The interesting thing about this section of the camp is that our lodging was boxcars that had been converted into miniature cabins. My team joked about having their childhood dreams of being boxcar children come true.

Throughout the week we took time to practice our speeches and workshops for the state conventions we will start attending in the next month. We also began to explore the curriculum and content of a conference that we will present to state officers later this year. The week was also a chance for us to do a reality check of where we have been, where we are and where we are going. My teammates and I had a chance to grow closer over our common struggles. It continuously amazes me how I used to think that after our first training I would be set for the whole year. I know now that not only this year but the rest of my life will be a continual growth experience.

From Michigan I traveled to Boise, Idaho, with my teammate Brian for our second week of B&I tours. In Idaho we met with a feedlot company and the JR Simplot Company. Then we headed to California and visited with companies from San Francisco down to San Diego. The perk of doing B&I's in California and driving to all of your visits is that you get to see the beautiful sights. We took scenic Route 1 down the coast. It was filled with breath taking views and tourist traps. \$3.59/gal for gas was the going rate in a little tourist town. It was the only gas for miles though and we fell into the trap like so many others do. We also soaked up some of the warm sun in San Diego and stopped by the zoo in our free time.

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February 15, 2005

Where I'll be next week: Nashville on RFD-TV and Washington, D.C.

The past month had definitely been a whirlwind of activities. Even as I sit here writing, it is hard for me to imagine that all of this happened in the last month.

The month began with a trip to Georgia with all five of my teammates for the National Officer Experience Week. This is an opportunity for all six national officers to see what a normal week might be like during the next year. During the week we each presented two different workshops and gave one 15-20 minute speech. We also met with several businesses and industry representative and the governor. It was also one of the first times we were able to interact with the students we represent.

The people in Georgia truly upheld the title of southern hospitality. Everywhere we went we were greeted by friendly faces and beautiful scenery. Boiled Peanuts, grits, sweet tea, and low country boil (a traditional feast of vegetables, sausage and fresh shrimp



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

boiled in a large pot over the fire) were dishes they took great pride in. I gave them all a try but they were able to tell that I was a “Yankee” because I didn’t know how to go about eating the shrimp, sweet tea wasn’t a must, I put sugar in my grits and I found out that boiled peanuts are an acquired taste. We also received a warm welcome from the governor who is a great supporter of agriculture and who went to school to be a veterinarian. When he found out I was from Wisconsin he made sure to give me the dairy farmers hand shake which I was not familiar with nor prepared for. He said that I turned quite red when he only squeezed the last two fingers on my hand. One of my favorite visits was to Plains, Georgia, home of President Jimmy Carter. There we saw his boyhood and current homes, presented at his high school, which has been restored and is used as a historical site and community building, and stayed in a hotel themed by the decades. The town was small and simple, yet caring. It really felt like home. From Georgia we headed back to Indianapolis for a week of training and preparation for the board meeting and our trip to Japan. During the week spent a day with the Indianapolis Visitors and Convention Bureau. This tour was highlighted with a chance to walk on the floor of the RCA Dome where the Indianapolis Colts play. My teammates and I were so excited we took our shoes off and ran around on the astro turf in our official dress.

One thing that is important to my teammates and I is building our relationship together. We decided that we would spend our weekend off in Princeville, Illinois, at Jay’s family’s home. We will work to visit everyone’s family’s home this year. It was a nice relaxing weekend where we caught up on sleep and laundry while we met Jay’s family and friends and saw where he grew up.

After our weekend off we flew to Washington, D.C. for the National FFA Board of Directors meeting. The board meeting was scheduled during inauguration week and gave us all an opportunity to take in events happening in the city that week. My teammates and I truly got the full experience by attending the Wyoming State Society party on Wednesday evening and on Thursday attending the inauguration, the inaugural parade, the Wyoming-Texas Ball, and the Agricultural Gala. Most of these events were made possible by my teammate Emily Horton, and her congressman’s office.

The inauguration was not at all what I expected. I had always imagined that it was a very small closed event. My image was quickly changed. The actual inauguration takes place on the capitol steps and people view it from the capitol front lawn and most of the adjoining mall area is filled as well. Thousands of people spent several hours waiting in line on a cold January morning to stand for hours to hear the events. Few are close enough to make out people with the naked eye and a few more are in view of the giant screens set up to show the event. However, the feeling of being a part of history and the democracy that makes our nation a success was well worth the minor inconveniences incurred along the way.

After the inauguration we went to the Cattleman’s association building on Pennsylvania Avenue to watch part of the parade before heading to the nights events. Most people want to know if we got all dressed up in ball gowns and tuxedos. Our team wore FFA official dress. The balls were very different. The Wyoming-Texas Ball was enormous with thousands of people and several bands. Both the president and vice-president spoke. The Agricultural Gala was like coming home to a great party. Everyone there knew who we were and what we did. We met business leaders like Bob Stallman, president of the



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

American Farm Bureau Federation and both the outgoing and incoming secretary of agriculture. This event had about a thousand people and it was packed. As we made our way across the average sized ball room we probably met one hundred different people. Everyone there was like a big family. That's what I love about the agriculture industry, everyone is connected through there dedication to the future. We are all friends and when we get together the food is plentiful and everyone has a great time.

After that exciting week in Washington, D.C., we repacked and headed to Japan. E Japan truly opened my eyes to what is really happening in other parts of the world and how all of that affects the U.S. While in Japan we visited several agricultural high schools. In Japan the education system is very different. Students choose what type of school they would like to go to and they take an entrance exam to try and get in. They school is usually specialized and could be located as far as an hour from there home. All of the schools welcomed us with open arms we saw what they were teaching and met many of there students. I was surprised to see that one school had an equestrian team that was learning to ride competitively. Another aspect of our trip was visiting with business and industry we met with the U.S. Grains Council, Toyota and Mitsui Company to name a few. All of these visits helped us to see how important trade is in the world. We heard a great deal about the need to open Japan's border for U.S. beef and about how transportation costs are being affected by China's industrialization. A highlight of our business and industry visits was as a port where we were able to see a panamax sea vessel filled with shelled corn being unloaded. The vessel had come from the New Orleans port so I knew that it was midwest corn, which was pretty cool.

We also had a chance to sightsee and immerse ourselves in Japanese culture. We visited historical sites in Narita, Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima. My favorite of all of this was a trip to Miyajima, an island across the Harbor from Hiroshima. There we stayed in a traditional Japanese hotel where we slept on the floor on tatami mats, used a public bath house, wore kimonos and ate traditional Japanese cuisine on the floor. At first I was a little hesitant to just jump in and try it all. But I realized that it was a once and a lifetime opportunity after that I had no reservations. It ended up being one of the most memorable parts of the trip.

The last month has been full of adventure, excitement and growth. I can't wait to see what happens next.

January 25, 2005

Read all about our trip to Japan! http://www.ffa.org/students/documents/no_japan.pdf

January 14, 2005

If you are fortunate enough to realize your greatest dream in life I hope that you truly appreciate the experience. My dream for much of my life has been to serve as a National FFA Officer. Now I have embarked upon a year that will be filled with unforgettable experiences and a once in a lifetime opportunity to change the lives of FFA members and influence the world around me. I want to share this year with all of you. I hope my journal entries give you some insight into what I am doing as a National FFA Officer. Here is a look at what transpired between my return from the 77th National FFA Convention and the end of the year.



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

My hometown of Pittsville was very excited about my appointment and the sure did show it. When I arrived in Pittsville there were signs and banners adorning the local businesses. The local paper was filled with congratulatory notes and there was an event held in my honor.

The event could have been called “Jackie Mundt Day”. I felt like royalty. First I rode through town in a fire truck with my family. Many of the elementary school students and all of the high school came out to greet me. After some interviews with local media there was a program. About 500 people, students and community members, attended the event. During the program my FFA advisor, Bill Urban, and the Chapter FFA President, Jenna Fox (who happens to be my cousin) gave remarks. A video of the 77th National FFA Convention and my election was played. I also spoke to the group of about the feelings I had when my name was called and my wildest dream came true. This event helped me realize how lucky I am to come from such a wonderful small town. I am very thankful for the love and support shown by my community.

The Wisconsin Association of FFA also held an event in my honor. A reception was held for me during the Made for Excellence (MFE) Conference in Green Bay. FFA members from throughout the state were attending the conference so it was a great chance to speak to all of them. The infamous election video was shown again and there was a treat of cake and ice cream. The rest of my time off was spent with friends and family. November 29, I headed back to Indianapolis to start an intense month of training with my teammates.

December was an intense month. We spent the first week getting to know the National FFA Organization staff. We had an opportunity to job shadow or have lunch with every department of the staff. It was really interesting to see how an organization as extensive as FFA balances getting their message out and running a business.

California was an eye opening experience. If California was its own country its total agricultural production would place it as the sixth largest agricultural nation in the world. We spent one week in California touring and learning about the diversity that exists in our industry.

For most of our team it was our first trip to California. On the day we arrived we took a scenic tour traveling from Sacramento to San Francisco via the Golden Gate Bridge. Then we drove down the coast along California’s route one to the Salinas Valley. The Salinas Valley is home to a plethora of crops. We were able to see ranches (in California everyone calls there businesses ranches instead of farms) where cauliflower, lettuce, artichoke and strawberries where grown. It was so odd to me that it was December and I was eating strawberries right out of the field.

The next few days were spent in the San Joaquin Valley (otherwise known as the Central Valley.) We visited a dairy in Tulare that was a bit higher than average size for California. It had three milking facilities with a herd size of about 5,000 cattle. Also the board of directors of the Tulare Farm Show invited us to have lunch with them.

The whole time we were in California I had to defend Wisconsin’s “Best Cheese in the World” title. Everyone in California thinks they make better cheese. Luckily our final destination in Tulare County was the Kraft cheese plant and I could see cheese making California style. The plant that we toured makes all of Kraft’s parmesan cheese. What I found most unique about this plant was that the entire system was automated. All



Jackie Mundt National Officer Journal

cheese was made in enclosed vats and there was no handling of the cheese at any point. It was so different from what I am used to seeing in Wisconsin's cheese plants. One interesting, but very much traditional aspect of California we saw was the orange and olive orchards. We picked an orange straight from the tree and ate it. It was so delicious fresh. I learned that both black and green olives come from the same tree. The reason for the color difference is actually how they are processed.

The last aspect of agriculture we looked at was nursery operations. One nursery in particular intrigued me. At Burchnell Nurseries trees are grown and harvested to become orange, peach, nut and other types of trees. The intriguing part was that they start all of the trees with the same type of tree. Most commonly they use a peach tree to start.

When the tree is big enough they graft the bud of a mother tree to the original tree. This is what determines the type of tree it will be. The grafting is done because certain types of trees are easily diseased in the root area. By taking a plant like the peach tree that is less prone to those diseases they cut down on profit lost when the trees are infected.

We returned to Indianapolis from California. While in Indianapolis we continued to receive training. This time our focus was preparing for presentations, workshop and speeches. We all wrote a speech and workshop that we will present during the year.

Then we put our skills to the test. We traveled to high schools in the areas just outside of Indianapolis to present them. These presentations were a point of realization for me. I was really frustrated while we were preparing and presenting them. I expected it to be easier and my performance to be amazing the first time. What I found was this: Just because you reach a new position doesn't mean you automatically flip a switch and are the master of your position. Hard work and a willingness to grow are what will make you the best you can be at your job.

On December 22, we all headed home to spend the holidays with our family. Being away for so long definitely makes coming home so much more exciting.

The last two months have been a whirlwind of events and emotions. I know that this year will be full of up's and down's but I know it will be worth it in the end.