

IN THIS ISSUE

Professional Development

- 3... Keep the Professional Fires Burning
- 4... Professional Development in Action
- 5... A Veteran Teacher's Perspective
- 6... NCLB, Graduation Requirements and Agricultural Education
- 7... Setting a Strong Involvement Example
- 8... Professional Award Recognition: What is the Value?
- 10... Steps Along the Professional Development Path
- 11... Unique Program Meets Student Needs
- 12... Former FFA Member Leads Joint Task Force Katrina
- 14... Professional Development Takes Effort
- 15... Professional Development, Different for Everyone
- 15... What Teachers Make
- 16... Modeling a Healthy Lifestyle
- 17... Teacher Resources
- 19... FFA News
- 20... Opportunity in Morocco for Collegiate Students

Professional Development: Sharpening the Saw

you've heard the old adage about the two woodsmen competing against each other to see who can cut the most wood in a day. It comes as no surprise that the individual who takes time to sharpen his saw wins the contest.

In his critically acclaimed book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Successful People*, author Stephen Covey bases the seventh habit on this concept—sharpening the saw. Covey encourages his readers to invest time and energy in developing the four major dimensions of their lives – physical, social/emotional, spiritual and mental. As an education professional and a role model to your students, it is important to implement this habit.

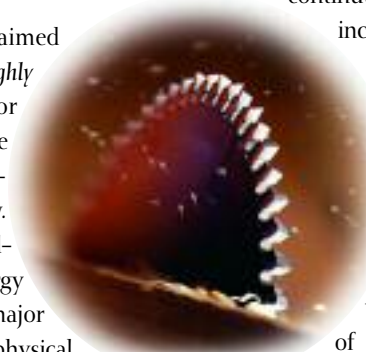
Creating a Plan

There are many approaches to “sharpening the saw;” however, the key element is to have a plan that will take you from where you are to where you would like to go. Most people’s mental development comes through formal education. However, as soon as we graduate, we tend to lose our study discipline and stop growing our knowledge base. This is where professional development comes into play. Do you have a professional development plan in place? The opportunities for growth are many.

Are you a member of any professional organizations? Do you participate in in-

service training and other professional development events regularly? Have you earned an advanced degree? What professional certifications have you pursued? Have you considered becoming board certified?

Beyond these big-picture items, there are specific small steps each of us can implement on a daily basis that will move us along the continuum of understanding. These include creating and following a specific regimen to learn more about the industry we serve and our world as a whole. Do you subscribe to any magazines, newsletters or other periodicals (electronic or hard copy) and read them regularly to stay abreast of agriculture? If not, consider doing so.



Value of Reading

In addition, Covey recommends reading a book a month to increase our knowledge and expand our horizons. He writes that by reading, a person can get into the best minds of the day or that have ever been in the world. To emphasize the point, he writes, “The person who doesn’t read is no better off than the person who can’t read.”

This issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* focuses on professional development and provides a variety of ideas regarding how to approach the topic. Learn more about how agricultural education professionals across the country have invested their time and talents in sharpening their individual saws, and begin your own professional development plan.



Are you **19-22?**

Is **production agriculture**
YOUR career choice?

Are you
currently attending
college?



The **NEW CENTURY FARMER PROGRAM**, sponsored by Pioneer Hi-Bred International and Rabobank in cooperation with the National FFA Organization, is intended to help young, prospective farmers see the exciting opportunities available to them in the 21st century. The time has never been better to be in the farming business. Here is an opportunity that can help pave the way for young people to be successful in this arena.

If selected as a New Century farmer, you will participate **IN AN ALL-EXPENSE PAID EDUCATIONAL SEMINAR AROUND THE MIDDLE OF JULY 2006**. During the seminar, you will learn how farmers can profit from visioning, value-added products, new technology, new farm business opportunities and business alliances with other producers; learn ways to overcome common challenges faced by young farmers; network with a group of extraordinary young people who are excited about pursuing production agriculture as a career; connect with an innovative farmer-mentor who can share his/her experiences in farming.



Applicants must be attending a 2 or 4 year post secondary institution with a major in agriculture, between the ages of 19-22 (must be 19 by March 1, 2006) with plans to go into production agriculture after school. The application will be available to download from www.ffa.org/programs/ncfarmer/index on October 15, 2005.

FFA Advisors Making a Difference is published eight times a year to assist FFA advisors in making a positive difference in the lives of students.

Publication Staff

Ernie Gill, Editor
Jeri Mattics Omernik, Managing Editor
Jody Mattics, Graphic Design
Amber Striegel, Communication Specialist

Correspondence and Address Changes

All correspondence should be sent to Ernie Gill, editor. Old and new addresses, including label, should be sent to Ernie Gill, editor. Both should be mailed to:

FFA Advisors Making a Difference

6060 FFA Drive

P.O. Box 68960

Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960

You may send electronic messages to the editor at egill@ffa.org or to the managing editor at jmo@rmmc.biz.

The National FFA Organization is a resource and support organization that does not select, control or supervise state association, local chapter or individual member activities except as expressly provided for in the National FFA Organization Constitution and Bylaws.

Important Contacts

FFA Staff	317-802-6060
FFA Ordering	1-888-332-2668
FFA Alumni	317-802-6060
NAAE	1-800-509-0204
The Council	1-800-772-0939
FFA website	http://www.ffa.org

The FFA Mission

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

The Agricultural Education Mission

Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems.

Rocky Mountain Marketing Communications, Inc.

Editorial Consultant

Published by Larry D. Case, Coordinator, Agricultural and Rural Education, U.S. Department of Education

This publication is available online at

[\[www.ffa.org/media/html/med-pub-index-htm\]](http://www.ffa.org/media/html/med-pub-index-htm)

Watch for the LPS Logo



The logo shows how this issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* relates to Local Program Success, a national initiative to strengthen agricultural education programs. You'll see this icon on all FFA materials. The shaded apples show which areas the materials address.

Perspectives

Keep the Professional Fires Burning



By Ed Mueller
Agriculture Teacher
Garretson, S.D.

a couple of weeks ago to reduce our home heating costs, I bought a corn furnace. Through a period of learning and advice from those who have mastered operating a corn furnace, we were able to get the unit installed and running. Within a few days, the weather turned colder. I didn't keep up with putting corn in the furnace hopper and the fire went out. The whole incident allowed me to reflect on the importance of professional development.

In college, we as agriculture teachers received some level of preparation for what we were about to encounter as we were "installed" at our first school. However, as many of us discovered, the art of good teaching is actually a journey of self-improvement and adaptation to change. Those who refuse to recognize this generally leave the profession. To prevent the fire of teaching from going out, we need to periodically "fill the hopper" with new techniques, methods and professional involvement.

So how can we keep the fire burning? First, be open to new opportunities. Professional in-service opportunities are available at all levels. Workshops on science integration have been available at the national FFA convention for several years. Other opportunities for excellent national workshops occur at the NAAE convention in December and the National Ag Education In-service in February. If summer works better, the NAAE cooperates with several companies to offer intense workshops over a several-day period.

At area levels, there are NAAE regional conferences where host states offer quality tours and workshops for attendees. State conferences offer similar opportunities. State departments of education also offer workshops on integrating academics into our ag classes.

Sometimes, fear of the unknown or being stuck in a teaching rut keep us from stretching beyond what we currently teach. Locking yourself in like this can cause your teaching to become sterile and your excitement towards teaching to wane. I have seen teachers rejuvenated after they attended a professional development workshop and ventured into a new area of teaching.

As true professionals, we need to participate in these opportunities, if not for our own good, at least for the good of our students. Not only will participation in these workshops help improve our teaching, but it will also develop life-long connections with other teachers. Often these fellowships alone can keep the fire burning for teaching.

To find out more about available professional development opportunities, check out the NAAE website at [\[www.naae.org\]](http://www.naae.org). You will find information on workshops and conferences endorsed by the NAAE, as well as state sites that will supply similar opportunities. Fill your "hopper" with professional activities and keep your teaching fire burning!



Professional Development in Action

Jona Kay Squires, who teaches agriculture in Norman, Okla., is an icon of professional development, although she doesn't necessarily agree with that description. She sees her involvement in professional development activities much more organically.

"We push our students to explore, learn and grow," Squires says. As education professionals, we need to expect no less from ourselves. We must personally invest in our development and expand our comfort zones."

"As I became more involved, I discovered many benefits," Squires explains. "By attending regional and national meetings, I not only increased my technical skills and knowledge base by attending workshops, but I also gained a greater appreciation for the profession. I learned about the larger scope of agricultural education and developed a network of people from other states. As you meet people and get to know them, they become great resources for your program, and you become more committed to the profession."

Reaping the Benefits

One thing led to another, and before she knew it, Squires had become active in the Oklahoma Association for Career and Technical Education. She is now serving a three-year term as chair of the OkACTE awards committee. As such, her responsibilities include reviewing all of the award applications from each division. This, in turn, provides a wealth of ideas from leading teachers across the state.

One area Squires feels needs additional attention is that of mentorship. "We are losing a lot of our teachers from the profession before they've been in the classroom for five years," she says. "As leaders, we need to address this challenge and determine how we can mentor our young teachers and encourage them to stay in the profession."

Squires continues, "We need to cultivate this younger group for a variety of

“
We push our students to **explore, learn and grow.**” As **education professionals**, we need to expect no less from ourselves. We must **personally invest** in our development and expand our comfort zones.
”

reasons, one of which is to provide leadership. Our professional organizations are no different than our FFA chapters. We need to groom young leaders so they'll be ready to serve as officers and lead our profession forward."

Paths of Progress

Many teachers have followed similar paths to leadership—paths that tend to bear a striking resemblance to those students follow to leadership positions. First, they join their professional organization, then they volunteer to serve on a committee (or are volunteered to serve by someone who believes in them). This often leads to service on the leadership team and more advanced assignments.

When asked how she encourages her peers to become more active, she laughs and says, "I use the same techniques I use on my students. I tell teachers to try it once because they have so little to lose and so much to gain. We're all trying to meet our students' and our communities' needs, so I share how being involved has helped me be a better teacher and help my students."

Squires continues, "To be effective as educators, we must continually broaden our spectrum of knowledge and embrace life-long learning. That is at the heart of what it means to be an educator."

 **Professional Growth**



Squires teaches Agriscience I students about beef muscle function and structure using clay.

Volunteering to Serve

Squires, who has been teaching for seven years, became involved by volunteering to serve on her state teacher association's awards committee. After two years of committee work, she agreed to run for the Oklahoma Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association board of directors. After two years on the board, she was elected to a board office.

A Veteran Teacher's Perspective

Charles Funk has been teaching agriculture for 36 years, the last 20 at Sebeka High School in Minnesota. During that time, he has developed significant insight into professional development and serving his students' needs.

Think Like a 7th Grader

"I have the opportunity to teach each seventh-grade student in our school for one quarter," Funk says. "These students are so eager to learn and curious that I like to use them as an example. I think sometimes teachers need to think more like seventh graders. We must maintain a curious mindset and energetically pursue new ideas. I believe educators have an ethical responsibility to keep up with changing technology."

Funk says teachers can gain professional knowledge from many avenues. "I've taken many courses but haven't necessarily concentrated on getting an advanced degree. I focus on what my students are interested in and attend industry conferences to stay up to date."

“
Sometimes teachers need to **think** more like **seventh graders**. We must maintain a curious mindset and energetically pursue new ideas. I believe educators have an **ethical responsibility** to **keep up** with changing **technology**.
”

Industry Information

As examples, Funk cites an agriculture technology conference held every January and an annual forestry workshop held every February. "I find these industry events very helpful in making contact with the experts and in gaining knowledge I can put to work for my students. Sometimes teachers focus only on teaching conferences and overlook those in technical agriculture. I think it's important to have a mix."

Funk also subscribes to relevant publications, both online and hard copy. "The Red River Farm Network publishes a weekly e-newsletter that I find very helpful," he says. "It provides a quick update of what's happening in my region in agriculture. As an example, in our area closing the Canadian border to beef because of a BSE occurrence had a significant impact. They helped me keep on top of that issue."

Build Your Network

Beyond formal opportunities for professional development, Funk encourages his colleagues to take advantage of their peers and the informal opportunities that present themselves. "Our chapter travels to

the national FFA convention on a bus with several other area chapters," he explains. "For much of the ride, I sat next to Minnesota's agriscience teacher of the year award winner and had a great discussion. Over the years, I have learned so much by just asking questions of my fellow teachers."

Funk chuckles as he continues, "At a recent biotechnology seminar, I discovered how dated what I learned in college is. In today's world, things change so rapidly that we must constantly be learning, adapting and improvising. Our students adapt to using technology, and we as educators have to adapt, too."

As he thinks back over the time he's spent in the classroom, Funk references the dairy industry. When he started teaching, dairy farming was the predominant industry in the area. Today, that industry has dwindled; very few of his students are from working dairy farms.

"If we as teachers aren't constantly updating our skills to match our students' needs, we'll soon find ourselves irrelevant. I'm still teaching because I feel like I'm making a positive difference to my students. When I don't feel I'm able to do that any longer, that'll be the day I quit."

Sebeka by the Numbers

- ~180 students in grades 9-12
- ~100 students in agricultural education program, grades 9-12
- All seventh-grade students take a one-quarter exploratory agriculture course (12 students per semester)
- Population of Sebeka ~ 710
- Approximately two-thirds of agriculture students are from rural, non-farm backgrounds
- Courses include introduction to agricultural science, forestry, wildlife, crops and horticulture, soil and water management, animal science, advanced animal science, small engines, introduction to welding, advanced welding, and agricultural business management (as an independent study course)



Funk (back row, center) with the Sebeka FFA Forestry CDE team, which placed third nationally.

NCLB, Graduation Requirements and Agricultural Education

Education in the United States is undergoing tremendous upheaval as long-standing systems are challenged by new legislation and regulations. From the federal “No Child Left Behind” Act to state- and local-level changes in graduation requirements, educators and administrators are being asked to think differently and produce graduates who are better prepared for the future.

A key part of the NCLB legislation is the requirement for highly qualified teachers. “Highly qualified” is a specific term defined by No Child Left Behind. The law outlines a list of minimum requirements related to content knowledge and teaching skills that a highly qualified teacher would meet. The law, however, also recognizes the importance of state and local control of education and, therefore, provides the opportunity for each state to develop a definition of highly qualified that is consistent with NCLB as well as with the unique needs of the state. For more information, visit www.ed.gov.

Graduation Requirements

Add to the “highly qualified” requirement a move by many states to increase graduation requirements, specifically in the areas of math and science, and elective subject areas – including agriculture – become threatened. For example, if your state adds a science credit and a math

credit to the graduation requirements, how many students will be able to enroll in your program? What can you do to position your program for success in that environment? Can students receive science or math credit for any agriculture courses? What does that mean in terms of your professional development?

At the state level, agricultural education leaders are working with their colleagues to create plans of action to address these challenges. For example, in Minnesota Joel Larsen, agricultural education program specialist with the Minnesota Department of Education, is exploring the possibilities and creating tools for teachers.

“Maintaining the integrity of our unique, three-part program is critical to our success. What sets us apart from the academic teachers are the FFA and SAE components.”

“Starting in 2000, Minnesota will require three science credits to graduate,” Larsen explains. “We’ve been working with our academic counterparts to determine if some of those can be delivered by agriculture programs. To do that, we have to identify and demonstrate which science standards are built into which courses and how they are being met.”

This requires reviewing the state’s academic science standards and cross-referencing them with the units and lessons in animal science, plant science, biotechnology and other courses. “Basically, we’re trying to identify science concepts that are already covered in our courses,” Larsen explains. “We are creating a tool teachers can use with their curriculum directors, administrators and others to communicate how the agriculture program helps them meet graduation requirements.”

However, Larsen cautions, “We need to be very careful as we move forward. As we look at what we offer, we need to be

concerned that we’re not giving up on our core – agriculture. We don’t want our agriculture teachers to become biology teachers. Maintaining the integrity of our unique, three-part program is critical to our success. What sets us apart from the academic teachers are the FFA and SAE components.”

Adding Certifications

All tied up in the discussion is whether or not agriculture teachers will be required to be certified in science for the courses they offer to carry science credits. The same goes for math credits. Some states encourage agriculture teachers to add certifications beyond agriculture, while others discourage the practice for fear those who have science certifications will be converted to science teachers.

Do you know where your state leaders stand on the issue? Have you taken part in the dialogue? How about the local level? Whether or not you choose to pursue additional certification, the need for professional development has never been greater.

Scott Stump, agricultural education program director in Colorado, encourages teachers to continue developing their skills. “The more a teacher has to offer a school, the more valuable the agricultural education program becomes. It is an asset in the eyes of administrators. Those teachers who prove their worth by managing high quality programs won’t be threatened by changing requirements.”

 Professional Growth



Setting a Strong Involvement Example

Iarry Way, who teaches agriculture at Clearfield Area High School in Clearfield, Penn., doesn't mince words when it comes to professional development.

"My theory is that if you want your students to be involved in the student organization, you need to demonstrate involvement in your teacher organization," Way says.

Walk this Way

Way puts his theory into motion through his personal commitment to professional development and service. He is currently serving as president of the Pennsylvania Association of Agriculture Educators.

Setting a good example is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg, according to Way. "As agriculture teachers, our subject matter is constantly changing. We need to stay updated, and becoming involved in your state teacher organization is the first place to start."

Step One

Way's professional development started early. As a first-year teacher, he was selected to participate in the Teachers Turn the Key program offered by the National Agriculture Educators Association. "That was an awesome opportunity to learn more about the profession, become involved in the professional organization at the national level and receive excellent

resources that I could take home and use in my classroom."

Participating in that program also helped Way start developing a professional network. "I've learned to avoid pitfalls by listening to my fellow teachers," Way says. "Not only are they invaluable resources for gleaning ideas, but they can tell you what to avoid and save you all sorts of headaches."

Uncovering Resources

Beyond the networking and resources that are available through the PAAE, Way encourages teachers to be creative in seeking assistance. "The largest segment of the agriculture industry in our area is forestry," he says, "so my program focuses on forestry. I applied for and received a grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture that allowed for forestry field trips."

The field trips consisted of touring four different woodlots, one of which was being harvested. Way took the opportunity to point out the safety issues during harvest, the environmental impacts and how they were being mitigated. The second lot hadn't been harvested for 100 years. A third lot had been harvested every 20 years, and the last lot had been harvested 10 years prior. The final stop was at a sawmill. Way and his students experienced how the harvested timber is dried in a kiln and processed into lumber.

"Most of my students' experience with forestry consists of enjoying the forest themselves and of seeing log trucks on the road," Way says. "The field trips are an awesome way to show them the complete



spectrum of forestry and the careers involved. I point out everything from jobs stacking lumber to grading timber to working in an office environment. They see the different career opportunities; we discuss what skills are needed and how each of the jobs is valued. I ask them what value they would bring to the industry. This gives them a reason to apply the math and science skills they are learning. It brings their education into a very clear focus."

Investing in Yourself

Like many schools, Clearfield Area High School has changed the way it manages professional development because of the No Child Left Behind Act. However, Way reinforces the need for teachers to find ways to stay engaged. "I just attended an evening workshop on greenhouse management at Penn State," he says. "We toured a newer facility and learned about changes in that industry. It is up to each teacher as a professional to take responsibility for their own professional development and make it happen."

Clearfield Area By the Numbers

- ~1,000 students in grades 9-12
- ~120 students in agriculture, grades 9-12
- Traditional, 42-minute classes
- Courses offered are both semester and yearlong

Professional Award Recognition: What is the Value?

“**a**nd the winner is...”

Many times we hear this statement as we see FFA members on stage receiving an award. We instinctively know a teacher somewhere behind the scenes has worked numerous hours with those students to inform them about awards, encourage them to find an interest, answer questions on how to fill out the application and then get the applications postmarked by the deadline.

How many times have you as a teacher had that same opportunity to apply for professional recognition, but instead decided that you were too busy or didn't need the recognition? Most agriculture instructors/FFA advisors focus a great amount of energy on bringing home the awards for their students. Of course! It is their job to encourage and help students achieve. However, there is a place and opportunity for you as an instructor to also receive recognition for your service in education. Many times teachers forget that receiving recognition for the job they do is also important.

Role of Recognition

Are awards really important to you and your program? Many people have different philosophies when it comes to awards and recognition. Does a room filled with trophies and plaques really indicate the difference between a higher or lesser quality agricultural education program and FFA chapter?

Many agricultural education programs are of high quality, yet there may not be a plaque on the wall or a trophy in the case.

However, it does indicate that those teachers applying for awards have found that bringing home some recognition has provided positive public relations to occur in their school and community. It has helped to motivate students, parents, alumni, sponsors and yes, even the teacher. Recognition for your agricultural education program, FFA chapter and you, as the instructor, can play an important role in promoting your program.

Be honest with yourself. If you were looking for a professional to conduct business for you, would you look for someone who has been recognized by their peers for their excellent work? That is what awards from your professional organization can do for you. It helps others see your program in a different light and publicly displays the quality of your program and your commitment as a teacher to promote excellence in your teaching.

Benefits Beyond the Obvious

Today when budgets are tight and “accountability” is the key word, bringing recognition home to your school can make a difference in the attitudes of your administration and community about the quality of the program you provide in their school. It may make people think twice about eliminating an “award-winning” teacher and/or program from their school.

When teachers receive recognition for the agricultural education programs they have worked hard to build, the recognition comes home in many different ways. By taking the time to fill out an award application, you are also helping recognize others. It is important to remember that through these awards, you are also recognizing the teaching profession and



Mark Zimmerman accepts the 2004 NAAE Outstanding Middle/Secondary Agricultural Education Program Award, Region III, from Dennis Hann, representing the award's sponsor, Case IH. Mark is joined by his wife Cheryl, and 2004 NAAE President Roger Teeple.

helping others see the impact agricultural education has on students. You are helping recognize your students, school, alumni and others in the community through the questions you answer and the acknowledgements you make in receiving an award.

Setting an Example

As we encourage students to apply for awards, we also encourage teachers to take the time to fill out an application and apply for awards that can bring recognition to their program and what they are doing for agricultural education. In addition to your state teachers' association and the National Association of Agricultural Educators' awards programs, don't forget about the FFA Agriscience Teacher Recognition Program or maybe a local award given in your area such as a Crystal Apple Teacher Award.

Next time you are encouraged by your peers and nominated for an award, take time to fill out the application. Whether you realize it or not, as you answer questions in the application, it also helps you

reflect upon why you are a teacher, what you have accomplished and the goals you are continuing to reach. This is important personally as well as professionally. Many times in the rush of daily life, time is not set aside to ask these important questions.

Teachers deserve a pat on the back, too. You work so hard to help students achieve, you also deserve the recognition that goes along with your profession. Sponsors are excited and willing to recognize you for what you do for young people. They may provide travel, dinners, cash awards, and yes, trophies and plaques to recognize individuals because they see the value in what you do, and they want to encourage you to continue doing what you do and encourage others.

Go ahead, take some time this year and fill out an award application. You have worked hard! The potential recognition is well deserved!

By Mark and Cheryl Zimmerman

Editor's Note: Mark Zimmerman teaches agriculture at Spencer High School, Spencer, Wisconsin. Cheryl Zimmerman is executive director of the Wisconsin FFA Center.



Recognition Programs to Consider

As a student organization, most of the National FFA Organization's award programs are offered to students. The two exceptions are the Agriscience Teacher of the Year award and the H.O. Sargent Diversity award. Learn more about each of these programs at [\[www.ffa.org\]](http://www.ffa.org).

The National Association of Agriculture Educators offers a robust awards program to recognize and encourage its members, including:

- Outstanding Young Member
- Outstanding Agricultural Education Teacher
- Outstanding Middle/High School Agricultural Education Program
- Outstanding Postsecondary/Adult Agricultural Education Program
- Teacher Mentor
- Teachers Turn the Key Scholarship
- Ideas Unlimited
- Outstanding Cooperation
- Outstanding Service Citation
- Lifetime Achievement

Additional information on each of these awards as well as last year's winners and the applications are available on the NAAE website [\[www.naae.org\]](http://www.naae.org). The deadlines for submitting applications vary according to program; however, most of the teacher award applications are due May 15.

Beyond these national programs, most school districts and state teacher associations offer their own awards programs. A number of awards are also available through private industry, such as the ING, Disney and USA Today programs. Search the Internet and you'll find more than 118,000 programs!

Center for Rural Education Established at Education Department; William Smith Named Director

The U.S. Department of Education recently announced the creation of the Center for Rural Education to address challenges facing rural schools, naming former U.S. Commissioner of Education William L. Smith as its director.

Housed within the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) and working in tandem with the Secretary's Task Force for Rural Education, the center will serve as an information resource for policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels.

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings said, "I am committed to

addressing the needs of our students, educators, and parents in rural America. This new center will take a leadership role in advancing the cause of rural education."

The U.S. Department of Education estimates that nearly 42 percent of the nation's public schools are in rural communities or small towns.

A primary goal of the center will be to update *The Condition of Education in Rural Schools*, a report last released by the U.S. Department of Education in 1994. The center will also host a series

of focus groups and forums to highlight issues facing rural education.

The Office of Vocational and Adult Education, where the center will be located, has a long history of helping rural America. For years, the office has included liaison staff to the National FFA Organization, Larry Case and Coleman Harris.

More information about the Center for Rural Education is available online at [\[www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/12/12162005.html\]](http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2005/12/12162005.html).

Steps Along the Professional Development Path

When you say State College, Pennsylvania, most people think of Penn State University, its revered football coach, Joe Paterno, and the infamous Nittany Lions.

However, there is another long-time “coach” in town who has made his own mark on young people over the past 25 years. Paul Heasley has been teaching agriculture for 25 years and shares his passion for teaching not only with his high school students, but also with pre-service teachers from the nearby university.

In addition to his high school program, Heasley teaches at PSU in agricultural and extension education. PSU agricultural education majors come to the high school to take their methods course (AEE350) in agricultural mechanics. Each fall, the PSU senior-level students spend three days in a microteaching exercise to help them prepare for their spring student-teaching experience.

Job vs. Lifestyle

One of the first things Heasley tries to impress upon the Penn State students is that teaching agriculture is not just a job, not just a career, but a lifestyle. “Teaching agriculture is NOT your average teaching job,” he emphasizes. “It is a way to make a living, but it is so much more than teaching an academic subject because of the level of community involvement that is required to be successful.”

Heasley also stresses the importance of life-long learning. “We teach in an exciting

field and, as such, have an obligation to update our industry knowledge base and our teaching skills.”

Giving and Receiving

He also stresses the need to be involved in professional organizations and give back. “Every time I attend a teacher’s conference, I try to not only gain ideas, but to also share ideas. When I was younger, I felt strongly that it was my responsibility to take my turn serving as an officer in the organization and giving back. What I learned from that experience is that your time commitment is paid back 10 times over in social capital.”

Heasley strongly encourages younger teachers to throw their hats into the proverbial leadership ring. “Volunteering to serve gets you into the system and helps you build a substantial network of resources. It helps keep you current and provides access to resources that you wouldn’t otherwise be able to access.”

As an example, Heasley points to the success his program has had in receiving grants. “We all have challenges around us. I have a great technical director, and we’re always brainstorming and trying to focus on taking our students where they want to go. I’ve just tried to implement innovative approaches to serve my students and solve challenges.”

One of Heasley’s recent grants provided funding to create a model team teaching approach to agricultural



Heasley teaches students the finer points of poinsettia production.

mechanics, physics and electrical engineering (learn more at www.scasd.org/2497_125915123857/site/default.aspl). He says, “These subjects are all interrelated, but hadn’t been taught that way.”

Heasley’s program has also received innovative workforce grants that have allowed him to provide courses for student certification in pesticide application, tractor safety and wild land firefighting.

As he reflects back on his career, Heasley smiles. “I just go at it as best I can. I find working with both high school and college students to be professionally invigorating because you can see the different developmental stages. It’s great to be able to give back to a profession that has given me so much over the years.”

State College by the Numbers

- ~2,600 students in grades 9-12
- ~140 students in agriculture, grades 9-12
- Single-period courses in four career paths (Plant Science, Animal Science, Natural Resources and Agricultural Mechanics)
- Located 1.5 miles from Pennsylvania State University
- Offers dual enrollment with PSU
- Received 23 grants in last eight years, including two USDA challenge grants

Unique Program Meets Student Needs

Walk into the Animal Science and Management Program at the Live Oaks Career Development Campus in Milford, Ohio, and you might think you've just arrived at a pet store. Bill Stanforth developed the two-year program at the CDC, which serves students from 35 school districts in the Cincinnati suburbs.

Stanforth's program trains students to work in the animal care industry. Topics covered include: handling animals, breed identification, lab safety, diseases, nutrition, breeding and reproduction, parasitology, pharmacology, merchandizing, sales and salesmanship, dog grooming, recordkeeping and documentation.

Beyond the classroom, the program has a pet shop that is managed and staffed by students, and a clinic area that replicates the exam area of a veterinary clinic. In addition, the program has a research facility where students can work with mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils and other small animals.

Hands-on Training

"This is a very hands-on program," Stanforth says. "I try to expose my students to all aspects of the animal care industry and the job market. Every nine weeks, we bring in four dogs from a local shelter. We conduct a health exam and vaccinate the dogs, then assign them to students for obedience training so the animals can be adopted."

Most of the students come in wanting to be veterinarians, although many have never been around animals. "I've found that experience tends to change their perspectives fairly quickly," Stanforth says. "Some have a needle paranoia or very

emotional responses. They know they have a passion for animals, but have never thought about the day-to-day work a veterinarian does. They generally also haven't considered other animal-related careers, such as grooming, and how they can apply their creative skills in that area."

Many of Stanforth's students are classified as special needs and have individual education plans. "In this program, we can individualize to meet their needs," Stanforth says. "The biggest thing is that so many come to us with low self-esteem and self confidence. With us, they can finally experience some success and their self-esteem just blossoms. They discover they can be successful and their enthusiasm grows rapidly."

Beyond the classroom, Stanforth's students have established a track record of success in FFA award programs, winning state and national proficiency awards and state skills competitions. "Becoming a part of FFA is wonderful for these students," Stanforth says. "They attend a state or national convention and you get this 'wow' response. They didn't realize they were part of something so big."

Job Placement

As seniors, Stanforth's students are required to specialize in one area so they will be ready for afternoon job placements during the second half of the year. "We work with a number of local employers to provide job experience for our students," Stanforth says. "I match the students' interests and abilities with the employers' needs. It is not uncommon for these placements to grow into full-time jobs. Many program graduates move from being a sales clerk in a pet store to managing the store."



Bill Stanforth teaches students basic laboratory skills as part of the Animal Science and Management Program.

Stanforth continues, "Our program offers so many opportunities for young people who need different options. That is the real value of our type of program."

Student demand is greater than the program's capacity. "We can only accept a limited number of students into the program," Stanforth explains, "and we usually have 35-40 applicants for each available space."

Growing Opportunity

The industry demand for trained workers mirrors student demand for the program, with the number of animal care positions rising sharply.

Stanforth encourages agriculture educators to consider offering more diverse programs if the student need and interest is there. "Agriculture has so much to offer. I feel I have the best of both worlds because I get to work with students and industry. This type of non-traditional program can open a lot of doors for young people and fill an industry need. What better job could a person have?"

Editor's Note: Stanforth recently retired and now works with adult programs.

Former FFA Member Leads Joint Task Force Katrina

following the devastation wrought by hurricanes Katrina and Rita along the Gulf Coast, a real-life action figure emerged bringing order out of chaos and filling the leadership void.

Lt. General Russel Honoré, more than any other individual, came to symbolize what was going right with the relief and recovery effort. From the first images of Honoré leading the troops into New Orleans, to the television crews covering his efforts to get feed and fresh water to cattle stranded by Rita, Honoré's image looms larger than his substantial 6'2" physique.

Roots in Agriculture

While he has certainly found success in the military, Honoré gives much of the credit for his achievements to being raised on a farm and to his agriculture teacher, Mr. Roland Roberts. "I attribute much of who I am today to my father and to Mr. Roberts," Honoré says. "They taught me the value of hard work, of utilizing all of your assets, of doing things correctly and the importance of leadership."

A native of Lakeland, La., Honoré attended Rosenwald High School in New Roads. "When I first started in agriculture class, I was an NFA member; then the merger occurred and I became an FFA member," Honoré explains. "Those were very trying times, and Mr. Roberts' leadership was crucial to making that a successful transition for many of us. Beyond leadership, Mr. Roberts taught us the importance of everything from machinery maintenance and safety to investment decisions and managing risk effectively. He advocated the use of tech-

nology and stressed the importance of adopting new technologies as they became available. The skills I developed under his tutelage parallel quite closely with what is required to be successful in the Army and have served me very well."

Following high school, Honoré enrolled at historically black Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, majoring in vocational agriculture. "My initial aspiration was to become a dairy farmer, but I knew I needed a way to increase my capital to pay for a farm, so I decided to study vocational agriculture and become a county agent or a teacher as a stepping stone to my goal."

While he was in college, Honoré joined ROTC and found that the opportunities for leadership and the discipline suited his interests. When he graduated in 1971 with his degree in vocational agriculture, Honoré shifted gears and joined the Army.

"I got into the military, and I liked what I was doing. I also liked the opportunity to be judged by my performance as opposed to other measures," Honoré says.

Recovery and Rebuilding

Honoré was pleased to learn of the *Seeds of Hope* campaign and all the efforts being made by members and advisors across the country to help rebuild the Gulf Coast. "I believe that FFA members and their advisors can play a significant role in the rebuilding effort," he says. "Being a part of a large organization like the FFA is very significant because of the leadership component. Additionally, because of their backgrounds, FFA members and advisors understand fundamentally how to make things happen."

He adds, "Growing up on a farm taught me how to adapt and overcome obstacles.



Lt. General Russel Honoré

Farmers know how to use every asset they have, and they don't waste daylight. They have a sense for watching the weather and for maintaining their equipment. Each of these things is essential to military operations also."

Beyond the rebuilding effort, Honoré encourages teachers to incorporate emergency preparedness lessons into their curricula. "It is clear many people weren't appropriately prepared for these disasters," he says. "No community is immune from natural disasters. If teachers could lead their students through an emergency planning exercise to identify what they need to do should disaster strike, it could make a big difference. Every family needs to have copies of important documents gathered and in a place where they can access them easily. They need to have plans for their pets and other animals.

"Rural areas are really challenged because they are more remote and tend to receive assistance less quickly. Farmers and ranchers need to have a plan for how they can move their livestock out of a storm's path or out of a flood plain, should the need arise. Teachers can drive that effort by making assignments that turn into family projects."

Honoré emphasizes his confidence in young people. "The youth of America need to understand the stakes and be ready to take the lead. Agricultural education, in particular, can play a big role in helping people understand everything from water management to the role of elevation and risk management. FFA can

have a significant impact by building leadership skills and teaching people how to prepare for and respond to disasters.”

Reaching Out

“Those directly affected by the storm are going through some tough times,” Honoré continues. “Many of them are still displaced and face tremendous rebuilding challenges. One of the best things FFA members and advisors can do is reach out to affected individuals and help them continue with their ability to stay involved and participate in positive things like FFA activities. By showing them you care, by teaching good lifelong safety habits and leadership skills, you can plant those seeds of hope that will grow and thrive.”



(AP/Lawrence Jackson)

Lt. General Russel Honoré (r) works with President Bush and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff following Hurricane Katrina.

Honoré encourages one-on-one efforts. “If you can link up with a specific member or a specific chapter, I would encourage you to do so,” he says. “When you’re away from your home, it can make a significant difference to know someone cares about you and your well being. I would also encourage members to reach out to those individuals who may have landed in your community from the affected areas. Make them feel welcome and more at home.”

Honoré specifically cited the work being done by the Ponchatoula, La., FFA Chapter through the “We’ve Got Your Back” program (for details, visit www.ffa.org/soh/html/seeds_news.html). “They have found a great way to leverage their skills and make a difference.”

If your program is interested in adopting a program that will need assistance with rebuilding and/or supplying students and their families with needed items, please contact Samantha Alvis at the NAAE office via e-mail [salvis@naae.org] or phone 1-800-509-0204 with the following information:

- contact name
- program
- size of your program
- daytime phone number
- evening phone number
- address
- city, state, zip
- e-mail address

If your city/town/county is adopting a city/town/county in the affected areas, please pass that information along, and NAAE will try to match you with a school in that area.

Digging into the Challenge

Honoré also commented on the enormous need for young people with urban agriculture skills. “Most of the vegetation in the affected region has been killed. Young people with horticulture skills can help fill that need by replanting trees and recreating landscapes. That will be an outstanding way of applying your personal talents to this massive effort!”

While the most visible part of the recovery effort has focused on urban areas, Honoré doesn’t forget his rural responsibilities. “Cameron Parish in Louisiana was completely destroyed,” he says. “This is an area with 9,000 people and 40,000 head of cattle. The whole economy of that area is based on cattle and the shrimp industry. This area, along with many others in the region, need assistance with everything from rebuilding fences to revitalizing pastures.”

How does Honoré manage the stress that swirls around him? He returns to his roots by keeping a garden at his Atlanta

area home. “That’s how I relax and rejuvenate – by getting my hands dirty,” he chuckles. Honoré shares his harvest of potatoes, peppers, okra, tomatoes, cucumbers and corn with his friends and neighbors.

A real-life action figure reaching out and planting seeds of hope, indeed.

Technical Tidbits

Lieutenant General Russel L. Honoré is the commanding general of the U.S. First Army in Fort Gillem, Ga., and current commander of Joint Task Force Katrina responsible for coordinating military relief and recovery efforts for Hurricane Katrina- and Rita-affected areas across the Gulf Coast.

The U.S. First Army, also known as the Army’s 1st Division, is based near Atlanta and covers the region east of the Mississippi River. As commanding general of the First Army, Honoré oversees preparation of the units being deployed to Iraq. As leader of Joint Task Force Katrina, he now commands all active-duty troops from all military branches devoted to the storm recovery operation.

Born in 1947, Honoré describes himself as an African-American Creole, a mixture that includes French, American Indian and Spanish heritage. He was raised in a large family and has 11 siblings. On his family’s farm, they grew sugar cane, cotton and corn and raised pigs and cows.

Honoré describes his father as a “master of provisions, of providing for the family.” That skill was an early influence on Honoré’s character. Making the most of all your assets was another lesson gleaned from his days working on the farm.

LPS Staff

Ernie Gill
Team Leader
Office: 317-802-4222
Cell: 317-294-8410
egill@ffa.org

Kevin Keith
Specialist, Northeast Region
Office: 317-802-4254
Cell: 317-709-0806
kkeith@ffa.org

Larry Gossen
Specialist, Central Region
Office: 317-802-4352
Cell: 785-230-0899
lgossen@ffa.org

Jeff Papke
Specialist, Southeast Region
Office: 317-802-4350
Cell: 317-294-0896
jpapke@ffa.org

Michael Honeycutt
Specialist,
Office: 317-802-4262
Cell: 317-753-3319
mhoneycutt@ffa.org

Michele Gilbert
Program Coordinator
Office: 317-802-4301
mgilbert@ffa.org

Collegiate Services

Eric Schilling
Collegiate Specialist/PAS
Executive Director
Office: 317-802-4214
Cell: 402-202-6083
eschilling@ffa.org

Jill Casten
Program Manager
Office: 317-802-4356
jcasten@ffa.org

Michelle Foley
Program Coordinator,
PAS/Collegiate
Office: 317-802-4220
mfoley@ffa.org

Local Program Success

Professional Development Takes Effort



By Ernie Gill
Local Program Success Team Leader
National FFA Organization

The critical key to our success and longevity—both as a discipline and as a local program—is keeping up to date on the agriculture subjects we deliver to our students and communities. With this in mind, we must take the time to not only attend events of a professional development nature, but we must also take care to plan for the needs we have in this area.

Many of us are fortunate to teach in places where the state Team Ag Ed offers professional development activities. I have often spoken with teachers who are experts in delivery of a particular type of career cluster, although they may teach in areas of instruction outside that field. This is to be expected when so many of us are teaching a broad cross-section of students as the lone teacher in a department or as one of just two teachers in a department. Specialization is a luxury.

selection of professional development options matches the diversity of what you teach. It can be easy to select the area of our greatest expertise when that option is available, and certainly there are times when this option makes sense, but let's not ignore other areas of development and technical skills as well. Many states are also served by one or more postsecondary institutions offering professional development opportunities, either on site or delivered through web instruction. Please check with your local colleges of agriculture and the institutions in your state for options that may exist.

Some states have few options offered for professional development, especially that directly relate to agricultural education. In this case, look to the options offered by National Team Ag Ed. Some of these events include the regional NAAE conferences, the national NAAE convention, the National Ag Ed In-service, the DuPont Teacher Ambassador Program, the Delta Conference, the Washington Leadership Conference Teachers Program, special workshops offered through sponsors by the NAAE, the national FFA convention teacher's workshops as well as the teacher classrooms in the FFA National Agricultural Career Show.

Online Resources

Also, stay in touch through the National FFA Organization website Educator Page, the NAAE website, and specialty websites, such as SAE Central and those offered by curriculum and instructional materials centers and commercial vendors. Further support is available through the National Ag Ed Listserv (see the NAAE website for further information and to sign up) or through your state listserv.

Another option today is to contact the Local Program Success specialist for your area. Each of five areas of the country have a Local Program Success Specialist who works with your state Team Ag Ed to provide information and programming that addresses the needs of agricultural education professionals. See the list of LPS specialists in the left-hand column on this page.

Please contact your LPS specialist with your professional development needs and for further information about the many opportunities that are available. The options and areas of concentration for professional development have expanded greatly over the years, and I encourage you to take advantage of them and stay on the cutting edge of agricultural education.



Choose Carefully

If you find yourself in this type of a situation, make certain that your

Local Program Success is a national initiative designed to enhance the quality and success of local agricultural education programs. LPS uses the total program concept of Instruction, SAE and FFA and four strategies (Program Planning, Marketing, Partnerships and Professional Growth) to assist local teachers in facilitating successful local programs that meet the needs of students and the communities they serve.

Professional Development, Different for Everyone



By *Allan Sulser, President*
National Agriculture Educators
Association

What exactly is professional development? In an area as diverse as agricultural education, professional development can mean a variety of things and be delivered in many formats. For me, professional development is something I can put to use immediately in my program that will help me with my students.



The NAAE does an excellent job of providing training at its annual national

convention and at regional meetings that we can immediately use. One on my favorite parts of attending these events is the new ideas and materials I bring home each year.

I believe NAAE's new Communities of Practice (COPS), which are web-based message boards hosted on the NAAE page, will be an excellent resource as well. Log on today www.naae.org/membership/commofpractice/ and take it for a test drive!

If you can't attend a convention or regional meeting, the national FFA convention and state-hosted in-service meetings also provide excellent opportunities for professional development. Make an effort to work these activities into your schedule.

There are many excellent opportunities for developing our skills as professional educators. The key is that we create a pro-

fessional development plan and include a budget along with how our travel, registration fees and other expenses will be covered.

Finally, one of the best professional development opportunities I have experienced is working with experienced professionals and being comfortable asking them for advice. In today's terms, we call that mentorship. The key here is being willing to ask. I do it all the time. If I am having a problem, I'll ask someone who I have seen be successful. In today's world, that might only be a phone call or a mouse click away.

 **Professional Growth**

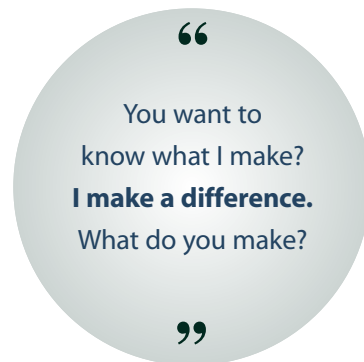
What Teachers Make

the dinner guests were sitting around the table discussing life. One man, the president of a large corporation, decided to explain the problem with education. He argued, "What's a kid going to learn from someone who decided his best option in life was to become a teacher?"

He reminded the other dinner guests what they say about teachers. "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach." To stress his point, he turned to one of the guests and said, "You're a teacher. Be honest. What do you make?"

Having a reputation for honesty and frankness, he replied, "You want to know what I make? I make kids work harder than they ever thought they could. I make a C+ feel like the winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor. I make kids sit through 40 minutes of study hall in absolute silence."

The teacher continued, "You want to know what I make? I make kids wonder. I make them question. I make them criticize. I make them apologize and mean it. I make them write. I make them read, read, read. I make them show all their work in math and perfect their final drafts in English. I make them understand that if you use your brains and follow your heart, you can do anything. I make them



understand that if someone ever tries to judge them by what they earn, they must never pay attention because the question just wasn't learned."

The teacher paused, then continued again, quietly and deliberately. "You want to know what I make? I make a difference. What do you make?"

Editor's Note: Submitted by Tom Hofmann, who teaches agriculture at Sutton High School, Sutton, Neb.

 **Professional Growth**

Modeling a Healthy Lifestyle

teachers serve as role models for their students in many different aspects of life. One that often gets overlooked is that of a healthy lifestyle. Students observe far more than the lessons you teach and the way you present yourself at school. They set goals and often pattern their behavior after teachers they admire and respect.

A Balanced Approach

Regardless of profession, many of us find living a balanced life difficult. We are under constant pressure to perform better at work. There always seems to be something else needing our attention, whether it's a chapter award application, a report that's due, a faculty committee assignment or someone in the community. Sound familiar?

The experts tell us we need to balance our personal and professional lives. Of course, this is easier said than done and often the effort to do so creates additional stress. Managing your time wisely can be the key to unlocking the magic balance. If you don't already use some type of structured time-management tool, consider trying one.

There are a number of good tools available, including the FranklinCovey system, Day Timer, Day Runner, Palm Pilot, etc. Whichever one you choose, be sure to take time to prioritize your daily tasks based on your long-term goals, not just other people's priorities that end up on your plate. Don't expect miracles overnight, but do expect to be diligent in applying the tool. Just like a hammer or wrench, time-management tools don't work unless you use them.



Exercise

The experts also tell us one of the best ways to alleviate stress is through exercise. For many of us, exercise is also one of the first items that gets sacrificed when we get busy. According to the Surgeon General, lack of physical activity and poor diet, taken together, are the second largest underlying cause of death in the United States (smoking is the #1 cause). If you're already a regular exerciser, redouble your efforts to keep daily exercise on your schedule. If you're not a regular exerciser, endeavor to make some type of physical exertion part of your everyday routine.

Exercise doesn't have to mean donning a lycra outfit and hitting the gym. It does mean doing something to increase your heart rate and work your muscles. Plan on making physical activity a part of your everyday life. Do things you enjoy. Go for brisk walks. Ride a bike. Dance. And don't stop doing physical tasks around the house and in the yard. Trim your hedges without a power tool. Climb stairs. Rake leaves. Make a point of parking in the space that is in the farthest corner of your destination's lot. Take the steps instead of the elevator or escalator. All of these simple changes in habit can add up to significant stress relief and better health.

Diet and Nutrition

Health problems resulting from excess weight are becoming increasingly common—so much so that the U.S. Surgeon



General recently issued a call to action on the subject. Nearly two out of every three Americans are overweight or obese, and one out of every eight deaths in America is caused by an illness directly related to being overweight or obese. Obesity among adults has doubled since 1980, while overweight among adolescents has tripled.

Our modern environment tends to encourage us toward empty calories and sedentary activities, rather than wholesome, nutritional meals and physical activity. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, only three percent of all Americans meet at least four of the five federal Food Guide Pyramid recommendations for the intake of grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy products and meats.

Encourage your students to make healthy choices, too. On chapter trips, do your students tend to load up on soda and sweets or munch on apples, carrots and other healthy snacks? When you stop for meals, choose restaurants that offer salads and low-fat options. In the long run, everyone will benefit. For more information on health and nutrition, visit www.surgeongeneral.gov.

 **Professional Growth**

TeacherResources



Backyard Biosecurity for the Birds

Bird flu has received a lot of media attention lately, particularly as it concerns the disease's potential spread to humans.

Find out more about Avian Influenza and how to keep poultry healthy at [\[www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity/index.html\]](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/birdbiosecurity/index.html)

Bioscience Resources

ActionBioscience.org offers scientific articles and lessons. Topics include the value of a garden, plant genebanks, bacteria (friend or foe?), biodiversity, real-life aliens (introduced species), apes, ecosystems, global warming, forest canopies, deforestation, water, genetic research, biotechnology, genetically modified foods, ancestry of modern people, microbes, evolution, DNA, how new species form, extinction, and more. Articles and lessons are correlated with academic standards. Visit [\[www.actionbioscience.org/lessondirectory.html\]](http://www.actionbioscience.org/lessondirectory.html) to learn more.



BEN: BiosciEdNet provides access to more than 4,000 reviewed resources covering 76 biological science topics: agriculture, anatomy, bacteriology, biochemistry, biodiversity, biotechnology, botany, cardiology, cell biology, ecology, environment, evolution, genetics, geography, human biology, immunology, marine biology, microbiology, molecular biology, neurobiology, pathology, pharmacology, physiology, public health, respiratory biology, soil biology, virology, zoology, and others. Registration is required. To learn more, visit [\[www.biosciEdnet.org/portal/\]](http://www.biosciEdnet.org/portal/).

The Theory of Everything

"The Elegant Universe: It's String Theory" is a three-hour miniseries exploring one of the most ambitious theories ever proposed: the "theory of everything." String theory proposes that the fundamental ingredients of nature are tiny strings of energy whose different modes of vibration underlie everything that happens in the universe. It unites the laws of general relativity and quantum mechanics, breaking a logjam that has frustrated scientists for nearly a century. Watch all three hours online at [\[www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant\]](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/elegant).



NASA Weather Resource

"Investigating the Climate System: Weather" helps students learn how to find, interpret and describe weather data. Students also learn about drought, flooding, wind and dust storms, hurricanes, and lightning, as well as the Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission (TRMM) satellite — the information it provides and why that information is important. Tap in by visiting [\[www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/topnav/materials/listbytype/ICS_Weather.html\]](http://www.nasa.gov/audience/foreducators/topnav/materials/listbytype/ICS_Weather.html).



Physics Resource

The Physics website offers a bird's-eye view of the great challenges in physics today. Read about self-organization, network theory, superconductivity, superfluidity, supersolids, quantum mechanics, quantum computing, quantum cryptography, nonlinear equations, chaos theory, the human genome, human consciousness, fundamental forces, grand unified theories, Higgs field, string theory, loop quantum gravity, supernovae, cosmic microwave background, neutrinos, dark energy, cosmic rays and more at [\[www.nsf.gov/news/overviews/physics/index.jsp\]](http://www.nsf.gov/news/overviews/physics/index.jsp).

Mineral Learning Activities

Minerals Management Service Kids' Pages offers activities for learning about tidepools, energy, sea water, ocean sand and gravel, drilling for oil in the ocean, and historic shipwrecks of the Gulf of Mexico. Discover this information at [\[www.mms.gov/mmskids/\]](http://www.mms.gov/mmskids/).

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Intern

The National FFA Organization is seeking applications from qualified individuals interested in a four- to eight-week summer internship at the National FFA Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. One position will start on June 5, 2006, and end Aug. 4, while the second will start mid- to late-June and continue through the end of July.

Job Description:

The National FFA SAE-based Programs interns will work with the National FFA SAE-based activities specialist to assist with the summer processing of awards and degrees, develop promotional materials for SAEs, assist in the development of instructional materials and various other responsibilities.

Position Requirements:

- Education: Bachelor's degree in agricultural education required.
- Experience: Minimum of two years of teaching experience and experiences working with students on the SAE-based activities of the National FFA Organization.
- Relevant Experience: Knowledge of agricultural education and the National FFA Organization are important. State and national FFA convention experience is preferred.
- Skills: Excellent writing and interpersonal communications skills. Project management skills essential, including scheduling, implementing and evaluating. Organizational and time management skills are critical to the success of this position. Computer proficiency is necessary using Windows 95/NT, Outlook 2000 and Access 2000.
- Location: The position will be located at the National FFA Center in Indianapolis, Indiana. Salary/living allowance will be \$600.00 net per week. Travel to and from Indianapolis for the position will be paid.

To Apply:

To be considered, e-mail your cover letter and résumé, including formal education, work experience and references, as a Word document to hr@ffa.org, confidentially fax it to 317-802-5257 or mail it to Human Resources at:

The National FFA Organization
6060 FFA Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960
No phone calls, please. EOE



Applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2006!

Testing may be required. The FFA is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer and does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, religion, sex, disability or national origin, including limited English proficiency, in any employment opportunity.

2006 National FFA Convention Registration

The registration fee for the 2006 National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Ind., has been set by the FFA Board of Directors at \$30 per person for those using the Indianapolis housing block. For those not using the official Indianapolis housing block, however, the standard \$40 registration fee will apply. The \$40 fee will also apply to those who drive in locally to the convention. For more information about the 2006 national convention move to Indianapolis, including complete housing information, visit [\[www.ffa.org/indymove/index.htm\]](http://www.ffa.org/indymove/index.htm).



FFA Publication Receives Award

The *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* newsletter won "Best Newsletter" honors in the Indiana Society of Association Executives Star Award competition, held on Thursday, Dec. 8. The newsletter, issued eight times yearly to FFA advisors, is managed by FFA Local Program Success Team Leader Ernie Gill, along with Rocky Mountain Marketing Communications. Amber Striegel is the FFA Marketing Communication Services consultant to the project.

The Indiana Society of Association Executives exists to support and strengthen association professionals' success. They provide Indiana's leading educational and networking events designed specifically for the needs of association executives. These associations include a broad variety of professions, industries, societies and social organizations. Collectively, they represent hundreds of thousands of members throughout the state, country and world.

Collegiate Scholarship Program

Each year the National FFA Organization awards more than \$2 million in scholarships to its members. There are many types of scholarships to fit the many types of FFA members.

Scholarships are given for a wide variety of experiences, career goals and higher education plans. Different awards may be used at colleges, universities and post secondary agricultural programs.

The scholarships are sponsored by numerous agricultural businesses through the National FFA Foundation, and new scholarships are added every year. The scholarship guidebook, application and other resources are available online at [\[www.ffa.org/programs/scholarships/index.html\]](http://www.ffa.org/programs/scholarships/index.html). All applications are due Feb. 15, 2006.

Of note, the Ford Scholarship program is available for FFA members who are high school seniors or active collegiate students pursuing a two- or four-year degree in any major. A list of participating dealers is available at the above-mentioned scholarship website (scroll to the bottom of the page). Each dealer can only offer one scholarship, but list multiple schools. If your school is near a state line, consider searching for a nearby dealer in another state, as dealers may cross state lines and include your program in their list if they consider your school to be in their service area.

Advisors are encouraged to contact their local Ford dealer and let the dealers know their participation is appreciated and needed. If your local dealer isn't yet participating, the National FFA Foundation staff is willing to assist. Please send an e-mail message to [\[lrandle@ffa.org\]](mailto:lrandle@ffa.org) that contains the following information:

- dealership name
- city, state
- contact name and title at dealership
- advisor name or person who has spoken with dealership
- chapter name and number

To qualify for the Ford Scholarship Program, students must complete the FFA Scholarship Application, then go to their local Ford dealer for a signature. Students who do not have a participating Ford dealer will be eligible for one of five scholarships to be awarded nationally.

Seeds of Hope Update

As of Dec. 22, 2005, the *Seeds of Hope* Campaign had raised \$566,487 to help rebuild agricultural education and FFA programs in the Gulf Coast states of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas and Florida hit hard by Katrina and Rita. Approximately \$38,000 of the funds raised were distributed to states to underwrite national FFA convention travel costs for selected participants from the Gulf states. In addition, the following funds have been distributed:

- Louisiana FFA Foundation, \$150,000
- Mississippi FFA Foundation, \$75,000
- Florida FFA Foundation, \$75,000
- Texas FFA Foundation, \$25,000
- Alabama FFA Association, \$25,000



Opportunity in Morocco for Collegiate Students

this spring, collegiate students will be selected for the opportunity to travel to Morocco as part of a U.S. Grains Council and The Grains Foundation-sponsored program. This exciting and unique study tour is open to college students interested in learning more about the United States' role in international agriculture.

The group will travel to Morocco, located in northwest Africa, and the surrounding region to visit various agricultural entities in May of this year. This Arabic country offers a different perspective for students in terms of crops and livestock. In addition, the land-

scape itself provides nontraditional views of agriculture. The diversity of Morocco will further develop students' appreciation for other cultures, agriculture and business.

The program's goal is to provide students with an opportunity to develop their skills and experiences for future careers in the agriculture industry. As students learn more about how grain produced in the United States impacts other countries, this knowledge may open doors to many more career opportunities.

The U.S. Grains Council seeks to build global markets for American grains. By doing so, they strive to provide opportunities for others to learn about how the global marketplace affects American agriculture. Consequently, their sponsorship of this new



program will give collegiate students a first-hand look at the benefits of world trade and marketing for U.S. grain and grain products.

For more information, including details on how to apply for this tremendous opportunity for growth, please contact Jill Casten via e-mail (ljcasten@ffa.org), or call 317-802-4220. There are a limited number of awards available, so contact Casten soon for an opportunity to take part in a life-changing experience.

 **Professional Growth**



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-7322

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

PRSR.T. STD.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
U.S. Department of Education
Permit No. G-17

Look for your next issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* in February. It will feature stories on program planning and middle school programs, as well as provide teaching resources and FFA news.