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Strong Program Attracts Students

david Hill doesn't focus on recruiting students into the agricultural education program in Van Horne, Iowa. Rather, this teacher focuses on building and reinforcing a strong program that by its very nature attracts students.

The Benton Community School District serves eight small towns. There are about 500 students in grades 9-12, and right at 100 of them are enrolled in Hill's program. "We really don't implement any traditional recruitment techniques," Hill explains. "However, we work hard to be visible in the school and community through our chapter and community service activities."

Positioning the Program

Mixed in among other activities, the Benton Community chapter hosts several events for middle school students. As an example, the chapter has hired several past national FFA officers to present leadership assemblies to all the middle school students. The past national officer is introduced by one of the Benton FFA officers, but the content of the assembly focuses on leadership and building character, not FFA.

The chapter also hosts a "Gear Up for Homecoming" dance for the middle school students. Chapter members plan, manage and supervise the event. "Both of these activities offer a very subtle message. The kids know the events are hosted by FFA and want to become a part of it," Hill says.

Hill also offers a five-week exploratory class for seventh-grade students. "I focus on the career opportunities available in agriculture and have my high school students



demonstrate what they are learning," Hill says. "Depending on the time of year, that could be floral design, parliamentary procedure or whatever else is going on. I conclude the course by emphasizing the importance of choosing high school courses that will serve them well in their careers and in life. I want them to think broadly about their futures and choose carefully."

Offer a Solid Program

Once students are enrolled in the program, Hill uses FFA membership and articulation agreements with local community colleges to encourage them to stay in the program. "FFA is the key to retention," Hill says. "I try to get each student involved right away. Once they are engaged, they will buy in to the rest of the program. They'll establish an SAE and apply for awards. They'll take advantage of the articulation agreements we have in place and earn college credit."

Hill also works to make students feel at home. "For being in a small community, this is a pretty big high school," he explains. "The students who stay in the program become like a family—the program becomes their comfort zone. They travel, plan and implement activities as a group. As a teacher, I find it very rewarding to see the students and their SAE programs grow and develop."

For Hill, the bottom line is making sure each student receives the education they need to be successful. "No single program will meet every student's needs," he says. "I have found it is much more fruitful when students are provided with information, discuss their goals with their parents and make their own choices."



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The Agricultural Education Mission

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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

Hook, Line and Sinker

to catch a trophy fish, we have to start with the proper tackle. The same goes for catching prize students. I believe that the right gear for student recruitment and retention starts with teacher attitude. If we want our students to demonstrate commitment, follow through, leadership and enthusiasm, then we must model this behavior ourselves. A positive attitude is contagious and can be transmitted to the FFA officers, members, school and community.

Every good fisherman knows where the fish are and each one of us has our own secret spot. My secret spot is the rural community of Yelm, Wash. This community has yielded many big prizes. Our initial casting occurs with presentations at the middle school for eighth graders and parents in the community. Our only formal recruitment activity is a new member barbeque and softball game. A hint on the presentations: have your young, polished members who represent a variety of high school interests present and highly emphasize the scholarship aspects. Presenting in this manner ensures every taste will be fulfilled.

Our biggest recruitment factor has been our high visibility in our community through community service, safety and elementary activities. Elementary students know who we are through Halloween safety programs, seed planting, Kids Night Out, food safety, etc., so you could say we value even the smallest fish in our big lake.



By Elaine Lewis
Agriculture Instructor
Yelm, Washington

The right bait is essential to a successful day on the lake. I have found that fun, food and friends are just the right combination to reel 'em in. I also believe that well-trained chapter leaders can be the most effective lure. During our chapter officer retreat, we instruct our officers in strategies to draw members into a discussion, glean their ideas and make students feel welcome.

I have found that the best way to set the hook is to give a student a specific job. When we have a committee meeting, we have a sign-up list with immediate tasks. The key is to make sure all students feel wanted, involved and valued. "Fish on" and the fight is on.

When fishing, I truly believe that the "fight" is the best part of the experience. Students need to be able to run with a project, overcome obstacles and fight against the current. At the end of the fight, you know you have safely netted your catch when students taste success and you praise them for a job well done.

I am a strong advocate of catch and release. When it comes to students, I try to catch as many as possible, and then release them with the skills necessary for a successful future. Just as fish come in many different shapes, sizes and types, so do students. Each one of them is important; each one of them is worth the fight.

Purple Hair and a Passion for Students

What are the ingredients for revitalizing an agriculture program? Most would agree that it takes an educated, enthusiastic teacher who understands the value of a well-rounded agriculture program. But for agriculture teacher Katie (Thalman) Silcox, it took one more ingredient...hair dye.

Ready to Conquer the World

At first glance, Silcox's purple hair might have you believing that she has no business teaching agriculture, but when it comes to the things that matter, she definitely has what it takes. Silcox began teaching at North Summit High School in Coalville, Utah, seven years ago. She had just graduated from college. Her first inspection of the classroom revealed desk chairs that had been welded together; evidence of the program's poor condition.

The superintendent gave her one year to show signs of improvement. He told her, "If it doesn't work this year, the program closes." Silcox says, "I was young and felt I could meet the challenge. I believed I could conquer the world."

Silcox's strong production agriculture background, as well as the fact she had four years of agricultural education, pro-

vided the basis for her teaching. "I grew up on a 1,200-head cattle ranch and I had a great experience in my agriculture program. My teacher was excellent, but I missed out on a lot of opportunities in FFA and I didn't want my students to miss out on anything."

An Iron Fist

"I ruled with an iron fist that first year," Silcox claims. "I established the rules and weeded out any who did not abide by them. I lost 15 upper classmen the first week. It was then that I decided to focus my efforts on the freshmen and sophomores."

Silcox increased student enthusiasm by showing them what they could achieve through agricultural education and the FFA. "I pushed them hard and when the younger students started achieving, the older students wanted to get involved." The program has grown each year and 100% of the students are now in FFA.

North Summit High School has had three state FFA presidents in the last five years, including the current state president. Past Utah FFA President Tiffany Clegg, one of Silcox's first freshmen, was Utah's national officer candidate this year. There are other accomplishments that can be attributed to Silcox's guidance, including four national proficiency finalists and the 2002 national proficiency winner in Specialty Animal Production Entrepreneurship, Jenna Keyes.



Silcox works with a student in her classroom doorway.

Silcox realizes that her strategies are unusual. She laughs as she explains her appearance. "I am a trendy dresser—I wear flip-flops, dye my hair, wear lots of make-up and have fake nails. I look more like Dolly Parton than an ag teacher," she laughs, then adds, "In appearance, but not physique."

Beyond her rather flamboyant appearance, Silcox implements more traditional techniques. "I used to send my upper-classmen to visit the eighth-graders, but have found sending my freshmen and sophomores to be a more productive approach," Silcox explains. "Their first visit is during FFA week and they talk about FFA. The second visit is in March and they discuss SAEs. The final visit is the week before the eighth-grade students select their freshman classes and they talk about leadership and just have fun."

This past year, this effort resulted in recruiting 46 of the 66 eighth-grade students into the summer agriculture program. This fall, 36 of those students are enrolled in Silcox's agriculture program and are FFA members.

Her style may be unusual, but her retention techniques are as traditional as they get. She attributes the retention of her students to SAE visits and good communication with parents. The fact that her program is well rounded also aids in retention. "Many ag teachers are great at one aspect of the program. I am not 'great' at any one thing, but I am 'good' at the various components that make for a strong, successful program," Silcox says.



Silcox's students garner eighth-graders attention with costumes and skits.

A Phoenix Rises from the Ashes

When Nic Armendariz accepted the agriculture teacher position at Ayden-Grifton High School in Ayden, N.C., three years ago, he realized he had a challenge in front of him. Armendariz was the twelfth teacher the program had in 13 years.

"After I had accepted a 12-month contract, I was told that if I did a good job and got the program's numbers up, they would extend my contract," Armendariz says. "If not, they were going to close the program. You could say that I was highly motivated to make things happen in a hurry."

The FFA chapter had not operated for two years and had not participated in much for 10 years. The students hadn't been passing the state assessment test (VO-CATS), and they wrestled with self-esteem issues.

Establishing Expectations

"There are major discrepancies between the high schools in this county," Armendariz explains. "As a result, many people don't expect much out of Ayden-Grifton students and they begin to believe they aren't capable of achievement. I was told when I started that I wouldn't be able

to do anything with these students. I simply couldn't accept that premise."

Armendariz jumped in and went to work, leveraging a certain amount of shock value to his advantage. "The students were used to one mode of doing things and they didn't know what FFA was," he says. "I challenged the students and let them know I had high expectations for them. I shared my favorite quote from Aristotle, 'We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, it is a habit.' I repainted the classroom and painted the FFA Creed on the wall. I tried to establish an FFA mindset in the room."

That first year, Armendariz taught every class as if all the students were freshmen. "We covered basic FFA knowledge and parliamentary procedure," he says. "When I felt they were ready, we held officer elections."

During that first difficult year, Armendariz cajoled students into competing in a couple of career development events and they experienced their first taste of success. "I took 10 students to a livestock career development event," he says. "They didn't do very well, but they had fun and the experience motivated them to learn more and do better the next time. One freshman girl competed in and won the state creed speaking event. After that, it was much easier to get the students involved. That little bit of success got the ball rolling."

Simple, Little Steps

Armendariz believes his primary job is to motivate students

and help them achieve their goals. During that first spring, Armendariz and his officer team created a PowerPoint presentation about the agriculture program and the things they had done. They presented the information to the middle school students and took along newly hatched ducks and chicks. Then, they hosted an open house for the whole school one evening as a recruitment event.

"The officers created chick footprints and taped them to the floor leading people to the agriculture classroom," Armendariz recalls. "Once they arrived, the guests could see the aquaculture system and other animals. That, in conjunction with the middle school presentations, worked really well for us."

Attitude is Key

Now in his third year at Ayden-Grifton, Armendariz has established a solid program and has 81 students enrolled. In addition to incoming freshman, many students are enrolling in the upper grade levels, likely through good vibes and peer attraction, Armendariz hypothesizes.

The students are also active far beyond the classroom. The chapter has produced eight state finalist teams in two years. "At this point, it's just a matter of showing them on open door and encouraging them to go through it by saying, 'Try this,'" Armendariz says. "All students have talents; someone just has to show they how to develop it and challenge them to do well. The kids will be unsure of themselves. As teachers, it is up to us to reassure them and challenge them to take a few risks and grow."

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, it is a habit.” Aristotle



Ayden-Grifton's prize-winning Agricultural Issues team members celebrate their success.

Learning, Leading and Succeeding in Louisville

as the gavel fell on the 77th National FFA Convention in Louisville, a record 53,071 convention attendees headed for home brimming with new ideas, dreams and goals of learning, leading and succeeding. It is impossible to capture the magic and the emotion that is encompassed in such an event. The following paragraphs, however will provide a brief glimpse into the arena and an overview of the convention activities.

Powerful Openings

As the convention has grown, so too have the time demands and constraints. Almost every convention participant wants to see reflections and the opening session. To accommodate all comers, convention planners combined these two popular sessions, then offered them at three different times. Each of these offerings included all the core elements accompanied by differing dignitaries and other elements.

Each opening session also featured a keynote address by football legend Joe Theismann. A two-time Pro Bowl selection, Theismann led the Washington Redskins to a 27-17 victory over the Miami Dolphins in Super Bowl XVII. Theismann focused

his message on the importance of teamwork and attitude.

You can listen to an interview with Theismann by visiting [www.ffa.org/convention] and clicking on "audio files." In addition to Theismann, the website contains audio clips (saved as mp3 files) from U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, and many other convention speakers and participants. These clips may be used in the classroom, or you may want to encourage individual students to browse and listen on their own.

Stars Over America

Every year, one of the convention highlights is always the Thursday evening session during which the FFA stars are announced. There are four star categories—agriscience, agribusiness, agricultural placement and farmer—with four national finalists in each category. Each of the 16 finalists submits an extensive American FFA Degree application and participates in a grueling interview process with a panel of judges in Louisville.

The 2004 **American Star Farmer** is William Erdenberger, 21, of Glen Haven, Wis. Erdenberger began his farming operation at age six. In partnership with his brother, he bought four calf huts and calves and raised them to weaning age. Erdenberger bartered his labor with his father, doing chores and small tasks in exchange for feed. That investment as a



six-year-old proved to be the beginning of Erdenberger's journey to the FFA star stage.

Erdenberger's 850-acre farm focuses on raising cattle and hogs, as well as growing corn and soybeans. He is responsible for making most of the decisions, including the number of animals fed, the vaccination programs and feed rations. Additionally, Erdenberger assists in coordinating the marketing of the herd. Currently, he has 400 head of cattle and 800 hogs. He has managed to increase both of these numbers through improvement practices and by renovating the pork production facility.

The 2004 **American Star in Agribusiness** is Travis Vine, 21, of Grafton, Wis. Vine's path to the star stage started in a garage with an old motorcycle, only a few tools, a little knowledge and a lot of ambition. Vine and his uncle began returning an old motorcycle to usable condition. That small project quickly became a profitable business for Vine.

He began fixing small engines out of his parents' garage and today has a clientele of more than 250 customers. He also moved his business, TCR Power Products, out of the garage and into new location downtown of Neillsville, Wis. He repairs a





At the first opening session, the dignitary who had traveled the farthest to attend the convention was in the spotlight. Major General Arnold Fields, who served as the 1963-64 national New Farmers of America secretary, retired from active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps in January. In May, Fields accepted an invitation to attend the 77th National FFA Convention to address the H.O. Sargent award finalists and the National Chapter Award Dinner.

In August, Fields accepted a position with the U.S. Department of State as the U.S. Embassy-Baghdad chief of staff for reconstruction. While interviewing for the position, Fields made it clear that if he were to accept the position, he must be able to return to the United States during October so he could attend the convention.

"I delight in how the organization has progressed in numbers and in its inclusiveness," Fields says. "What a pleasure to see more than 50,000 young American leaders and their mentors descend on the great city of Louisville, all focused on a common objective: learn, lead, succeed. It was one of the most high-spirited events I have ever witnessed. I greatly appreciate the growing number of women in the FFA; this is extraordinarily impressive, setting a statistical and demographic example for other organizations and institutions to follow. When I stood on that stage before thousands of FFA members and amidst the impeccable national officers, I realized how far the organization and our country have come. It appears we are poised to make the 21st century the most pivotal in our history."

Fields continues, "While many things have changed since I last attended an FFA convention 40 years ago, some things remain unchanged. What it took to be a leader in 1964 is still valid in 2004. Intellect, human understanding and moral character remain the centerpiece of a person's ability to influence others. These are skills I learned in the home and refined during my experience as a member of the New Farmers of America and the Future Farmers of America."

variety of small engines including chain saws, all-terrain vehicles, small tractors, feed carts, bale choppers, motorcycles and snowmobiles. Vine was recognized as a national FFA agri-entrepreneur in 2002.

Jeremy Glaspie, 21, of Springport, Mich., is the 2004 **American Star in Agriscience**. Glaspie's interest in agricultural science and research began during his sophomore year when his agriscience program constructed a greenhouse to produce hydroponic tomatoes. Glaspie's interest quickly grew into employment.

As a student at Springport High School and a member of the Springport FFA, Glaspie was approached by his advisor, Pat Henne, to manage the newly built greenhouse. The purpose of this greenhouse was to challenge students by offering a hands-on approach to growing tomatoes in a non-traditional way—without the use of soil.

When he enrolled at Michigan State University, Glaspie accepted a position as an undergraduate research technician in the Department of Plant Pathology. This gave Glaspie the opportunity to broaden his research interests to several different kinds of plants including zucchini, carrots, eggplant and watermelons. As a technician, Glaspie was responsible for chemical application, field preparation, research plot design and data collection.

The 2004 **American Star in Agricultural Placement** is Miles Kuschel, 20, of Sebeka, Minn.,. When Kuschel was a boy, he started helping on his family's ranch. "I thought it was fun, but not the career path I wanted to follow."

Kuschel's placement is on the Rocking K Ranch, which is a beef cow/calf operation.

The Rocking K is a rotational grazing operation covering more than 5,000 acres. The ranch has 900 cattle and 15 horses. When Kuschel began working on the ranch, he was charged with a variety of tasks ranging from raking hay to feeding calves and cows. He is now in charge of the day-to-day operations of the ranch, including breaking in new horses, pulling calves and overseeing the animal health program.

During his sophomore year at Sebeka High School, Kuschel decided to take a larger interest in the operation and purchased 27 crossbred heifers. Since then, these cattle have produced six calf crops and proven to be a very profitable venture. With the money earned from the calves, Kuschel has made many purchases to improve his operation, including a down payment on 20 acres of land. He and his wife, Sarah, recently entered into a partnership with his parents, Thomas and Linda Kuschel, to ensure the future of the ranch.

The four stars were announced and recognized onstage. They each received a plaque and a cash award of \$2,000. Each of three runners-up in each category was also recognized onstage and received a plaque and a \$1,000 cash award.

The American FFA Degree recognition program is co-sponsored by BASF; Case IH; Farm Credit System; and Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. Recognition for the Stars Over America Program is provided by individual contributors to the National FFA Foundation. "Stars Over America," a special audiovisual presentation featuring the finalists, is produced by Dupont and the USDA Farm Service Agency as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.





Agriscience Teacher of the Year

Kimberley Ann Miller of Ladera Ranch, Calif., is the 2004 Agriscience Teacher of the Year. The agriculture program at Mission Viejo High School had been neglected for a number of years when Miller arrived. Miller began teaching her students that science and agriculture are dependent upon each other. She implemented a skills training program for her students through which they work at internships or regular jobs that help them realize the real-life applications of concepts learned in class. By combining state science and agriculture standards, Miller secured approval for a four-year Agriscience Academy. The school's agriculture department enrollment steadily increased, and over the past two years, it has grown from 84 to 223 students.

The Agriscience Teacher of the Year program recognizes outstanding agriculture teachers who emphasize technology in their curricula and who bring excellence in instruction and presentation to the agriscience classroom and FFA activities. In recognition of her achievement, Miller received a personal plaque, a plaque for her school and a \$1,500 cash award. The Agriscience Teacher of the Year program is sponsored by the PotashCorp as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

Agriscience Student of the Year

A study on the possible photosynthetic variances in transgenic plants won Paul Ruddle, Valdosta Ga., the title of the 2004 Agriscience Student of the Year. Ruddle attends Lowndes High School and is a member of the Lowndes High FFA Chapter.

Ruddle conducted a four-year study on the early growth of transgenic plants to determine if the rate of photosynthesis was different in genetically altered plants compared to unaltered plants. Through a series of experiments, Ruddle determined that genetically altered plants and non-altered plants have the same rate of photosynthesis. This research is one example of how students in FFA practice real-world career skills through integrated agricultural education. Ruddle plans to attend a research-based university, majoring in plant biology or plant genetics. He would like to pursue a career in plant genetics research. He is the son of Paul and Carmen Ruddle, and his FFA advisors are James Corbett, Andy Harrison, Ulysses Marable and Claudea Paul.

The Agriscience Student Scholarship and Recognition Program is sponsored by Monsanto as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. Eligible FFA members are selected on the basis of research projects involving agriscience skills and the use of applications and new technologies in their high school agriculture classes. Students apply these lessons to their supervised agricultural experience (SAE) programs. They are also evaluated on their academic achievements, as well as their involvement in school and community activities.

H.O. Sargent Diversity Awards

The National FFA Organization presented its H.O. Sargent Diversity Award to Jonathon Goff, a member of the Tampa Bay Tech Senior FFA Chapter in Tampa, Fla.

The award recognizes an FFA member who develops and/or actively supports ways to reach underrepresented individuals/groups who have not yet been able to enjoy the benefits of agricultural education and FFA activities. Each of four FFA member finalists received a plaque in addition to national recognition during convention.

Being a student with disabilities, Goff recognized the need to provide other FFA members with disabilities opportunities to participate in events. Leading by example, he has showed other members that they can participate in a variety of FFA activities, regardless of their disability.

At J. S. Robinson Elementary School, Goff serves as a mentor for students with severe emotional disabilities and volunteers at the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Ag-Abilities Day at the Hillsborough County Fair. At the fair event, students with disabilities engage in various agricultural activities, such as lawn mower driving, floral arranging and plant identification. His goal has been and continues to be to show fellow FFA members and parents that even though faced with obstacles, they should always pursue their dreams.

The H.O. Sargent Award Non-Member winner is John Elliott, a retired agriculture teacher from Cheney, Wash. Elliott encouraged diversity in his agriculture



program and was admonished by his peers when he allowed girls to join the organization prior to the 1969 delegate vote of acceptance.

The H.O. Sargent Award existed in the New Farmers of America (NFA), the former organization for African-American agriculture students. In 1965, the NFA was incorporated into the FFA. This award, renewed in 1995, continues as an annual recognition program. All applicants have been involved with agricultural education and have implemented programs to promote agricultural diversity. The H.O. Sargent Diversity Award is sponsored by Monsanto as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

National Chapter Models of Innovation

The nation's top ten three-star gold chapters in the National Chapter Award program compete in each of the award's three divisions to be named model of innovation winners. As part of the application process for the honor, each chapter submits five activities in each of the three divisions. Each of the three division winners was announced on stage and received a plaque.

Student Development

The Canal Winchester FFA Chapter of Ohio was named the Student Development Model of Innovation winner. Among other activities, the Canal Winchester FFA sponsored a "Haunted Greenhouse." The program involved the chapter supporting a drug- and alcohol-free school event. Members realized the

importance of living and promoting a healthy lifestyle. The chapter advisor is Cyndi Brill.

Chapter Development

The Byron FFA Chapter of Michigan was named the Chapter Development Model of Innovation Winner. Realizing the importance of recruitment and retention to the success of their chapter and the entire organization, the Byron chapter focuses on attracting more members. The chapter sent high school members to present the benefits of membership to the middle school in an effort to persuade the students to enroll in agriculture. The chapter also held a fruit and nut sale, raising more than \$6,500. They also held an officer retreat during which the newly elected officers were trained in managing the chapter's activities and operations. The FFA advisors are Tate Forbush and Emily Oppen.

Community Development

The New Smyrna Beach High School Senior FFA Chapter of Florida was named the Community Development Model of Innovation winner. For its economic activity, the chapter operated an on-campus clam seed nursery that produced clam seed for local communities. The nursery has supported itself for six years from sales of clam seeds. In the environmental area, 25 FFA members participated in a dune restoration project, in which students produced sea oats and planted them at places needing restoration near the beach. The chapter also participated in the PALS program as a human resource activity. As part of PALS, FFA members regularly volunteered in a special education class, teaching students different aspects of agriculture and, at the end,

helping them plant a garden. The chapter advisor is Beth Guevara.

Middle School

The Fort White Middle School FFA of Florida is the 2004 Outstanding Middle School Chapter. The Fort White Middle School FFA Chapter promoted member participation, financial responsibility, positive images and positive interactions through organized activities. From hosting an open house for membership recruitment and involvement, to selling vegetables grown by the chapter, each member is engaged in activities. This outstanding chapter works very hard at getting the news of their chapter out to fellow students, chapter parents and community members through correspondence with the school and local papers as well as a monthly newsletter. Jim Huesman serves as the advisor for the chapter's 112 dues-paying members.

Career Show

FFA members passed through red doors into one of the largest career shows in the history of the organization. This year's career show featured a record-breaking 1,310 booths with 350 exhibitors focusing on everything from Purina Mills feed to Chevrolet vehicles. The 130,000 square foot arena career show is equal in size to approximately three football fields.

Kraft Foods offered free Kraft snacks to FFA members who participated in a mock Jeopardy game testing students' agricultural knowledge. They also informed students of internships, scholarships and career options offered by the Kraft family. John Deere also had goodies for FFA members who stopped by their booth.



"John Deere is one of the oldest sponsors of FFA," Cheryl Salley, manager of corporate sponsorship for John Deere said. "The youth involved in FFA are our future customers and employees."

Record Level of Financial Support

For the 59th consecutive year, the National FFA Foundation set a record level of support raised for FFA and agricultural education programs. The 2004 National FFA Foundation chairman John Rakestraw announced the foundation had raised a total of \$9,529,000 to support annual projects and programs for FFA and agricultural education.

"It has been an honor for your Foundation Sponsors Board members to secure funding to support the FFA legacy," Rakestraw says. "At times, I have considered FFA to be a focusing tool for young people. FFA becomes a filter that young people can look through to determine what kind of adult you can become. It verifies that a self-confident individual can have a profound affect on the community in which they live. It is about defining and crafting the kind of adult you want to become. FFA is about people who passionately care for others. I believe in FFA, but more importantly, I believe in FFA members. They are the best young people America has to offer."

Collegiate FFA

Collegiate FFA members from across the nation took advantage of the first ever Collegiate Career Expo. Organizations like John Deere, Monsanto, USDA, Kraft,

Carhartt and many others gathered in the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center to talk to college students about career opportunities their corporations offer from internships to permanent positions.

"I had no idea how many internships are available," Jodie Hasecamp of Missouri said. "This has been a great experience to open my eyes to a possible summer internship."

The career expo was a great learning tool for every student, no matter what they were looking for, Rita Wolloszym of New York said. "Having all the companies here has been a great way for me to prepare for future interviews," she said. "This is one of the main reasons I came this year. It helps you polish your interviewing skills."

Collegiate members had multiple opportunities to make a lasting impression on business leaders. By pre-registering for the career expo, members received a portfolio filled with personalized business cards, paper for taking notes, and a packet outlining job and internship opportunities. There were even opportunities for one-on-one interviews.

National Officers

As always, one of the most popular features was the national FFA officer team. Always crowd favorites, each officer's retiring address is available online as an

mp3 audio file [www.ffa.org/convention/highlights/conv_hgl_news.html]. These addresses make great tools for students' personal development and also for those interested in improving their speaking skills.

New Officer Team

At the final convention session, the delegates elected a new slate of officers to serve in the upcoming year. The new officers are:

- President: Jackie Mundt, Wis.
- Secretary: Emily Horton, Wyo.
- Western Region Vice President: Brian Hogue, Ariz.
- Central Region Vice President: Justine Sterling, Kan.
- Southern Region Vice President: Rachael McCall, Ga.
- Eastern Region Vice President: Jay Kelley, Ill.

For more information on the new officers, visit [www.ffa.org/convention/highlights/conv_natofficers.html].

Additional Awards and Information

As with many conventions held before, the 77th National FFA Convention overflowed with enthusiasm, opportunity, fun and life-changing experiences that can never be adequately captured on paper. To truly understand and appreciate the convention, one must experience its sights and sounds in person.

To relive the convention experience, or for additional information including photos, audio clips and complete lists of award winners and degree recipients, visit [www.ffa.org/convention/highlights/conv_hgl_index.html].



A Message from USDA Deputy Secretary Moseley

U.S.D.A. Deputy Secretary Jim Moseley was one of the many dignitaries who attended this year's convention. Moseley wasn't in Louisville on official business, however. Rather, Moseley enjoyed the convention as a proud father, watching as his son, Brandon, received the American FFA Degree.

Jim Moseley was raised on a farm in Indiana, and has 32 years of hands-on farm experience in grain and hog production. He was sworn in as the USDA deputy secretary July 17, 2001, by Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman.

As deputy secretary, Moseley oversees the day-to-day activities of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one of the largest and most diverse departments in the federal government. His responsibilities range from developing strategies to rebuild Afghanistan's agriculture system to domestic policy issues on everything from food security to conservation.

From his unique perspective, Moseley offers insight to today's agriculture teachers.

Lifelong Learning

FFA: You have stated that one of your guiding principles is lifelong learning. How can teachers reinforce the importance of that concept with their students?

Moseley: For us to succeed as a nation, it is critical that someone plant that seed in every young person's life. Parents and teachers can plant those seeds, nurture them and encourage them to grow until the child takes hold of the idea and internalizes the need to feed themselves intellectually.

Agriculture teachers have a great opportunity to nurture that idea of lifelong learning and set powerful examples. We're seeing more and more integration of math, science and language skills in agriculture curricula. This positions agricultural education strategically as the place where students can not only learn about agriculture, but can also reinforce their academic skills and apply them in real-world situations in a fairly sophisticated way. That's powerful. I believe that's why we're seeing the growth we are in the numbers of students enrolled in agriculture courses.

“Agriculture teachers have a great opportunity to nurture that idea of lifelong learning and set powerful examples.”

”

As a high school freshman, I had an agriculture teacher who thought outside the box. At that time, most agriculture teachers just taught production, but my teacher didn't. He saw the world more broadly, and helped his students see that, too. He planted seeds in his students' minds of things they could do that were bigger and better than we had ever imagined.

Listen, Learn, Apply

FFA: As Deputy Secretary, you have many opportunities to meet people and discuss ideas. Of these experiences, what would you like to share with agriculture teachers?

Moseley: Several months ago, I had dinner with Norm Borlaug. I delighted in discussing philosophies with Norm, who at 90 years of age, is still thinking about what the world will look like in the future.

As we talked through dinner, Norm once again led me down the path of wisdom by sharing about the green revolution for which he is so noted. Norm indicated that we've gotten about all out



of the green revolution that we're going to get. Now we have to evolve to the gene revolution. That's something those of us in agriculture are beginning to understand. But, most of those in the developing world who so desperately need it don't understand. The fact is that if we are going to feed ourselves, something significant has to happen.

Here's a man who is 90 years old and still looking for answers, still has a vision, is still thinking about the world as a whole. It reminds me of a story about a dad and a son. The dad tells his son, "I think we'd better go plant some trees."

The son replies, "But Dad, you're getting old. Planting trees is hard work. Why do you want to plant trees?"

The dad answers, "Because someone planted the trees that I enjoy today."

That is the essence of Norm Borlaug. The lesson for all of us is to constantly be diligent, listen, learn and apply.

One last thing. The most thrilling experience I've had happened a little over a year ago. I had the pleasure of walking out on a stage in Louisville in front of 20,000 blue corduroy jackets. The FFA members were really getting after it. If you can't experience the excitement and the thrill of an FFA convention, then you'd better get yourself to a doctor, because something is wrong. You're not living.

IS PRODUCTION FARMING
YOUR STUDENT'S CAREER CHOICE

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19-22 Year Olds Apply Today for the New Century Farmer Program



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Have your student apply for the opportunity to participate in the **2005 New Century Farmer Program.** The top candidates will be selected based on the quality of their application and the conference goals and objectives. This all expense paid conference will be held in Des Moines, Iowa:

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- Networking

Hear and experience how farmers can profit using value-added products, the latest technology, new farm business opportunities, and business alliances with other producers.

Visit our website to download an application form at www.ffa.org/programs/ncfarmer/index or call us toll free at 1-888-332-2668. **Hurry, the deadline is February 14, 2005! Attention Agricultural Teachers:** If your students apply for this conference and identify you on their application, you will receive a gift certificate from the National FFA Organization good for products or merchandise!



The National FFA Organization and Pioneer, a DuPont Company, are paving the way for you to become a New Century Farmer.

Volunteer Development Within FFA

Volunteers are often the core of educational, health, cultural and human service programs. They play a significant role—giving of themselves, their time and expertise—enabling organizations to reach many people. Without volunteers, many of these programs and the organizations involved would cease to exist.

National trends show that the number of volunteers dedicating time and services to public and governmental agencies continues to increase each year. In 1998, 56 percent of adults aged 18 or older in the United States volunteered—an estimated 109 million people (Independent Sector, 1999). Volunteers in the United States dedicated, on average, 3.5 hours of service per week, for a total of 19.9 billion hours annually to respective charities and pro-

grams. In all, the volunteer workforce in the United States represented the equivalent of more than nine million full-time employees at a value of \$225 billion.

So what does this mean for agricultural education? The role of the volunteer can be as simple as transporting youth to and from events, or volunteers with appropriate training can be utilized to coach and mentor youth in complex educational subject areas. Regardless of the volunteers' roles, their impact on the educational mission of an organization can be enormous.

The goal of the National FFA Organization is to develop and evaluate a modifiable educational training program that encourages the enhanced utilization of volunteers within the FFA organization. To accomplish the stated goal, the following objectives have been established:

- The importance of volunteers in agricultural education programs



By Frank Saldaña
Executive Director
National FFA Alumni
Association

- Basics of positive youth development
- Volunteer identification/recruitment/placement/retention
- Orientation/training/evaluation
- Volunteer recognition
- Risk management issues
- Financial management issues
- Agricultural education program development
- Database for local volunteer enrollment

All material will be ready for dissemination by the summer of 2005. For more information contact us at alumni@ffa.org.

 **Partnerships**

GOT TUBE?

Every year, an estimated 150 million pounds of inner tubes are deposited into landfills across the United States. U.S. Rubber Reclaiming, Inc. has partnered with FFA in an **environmental** effort to reduce this number.



Keep the earth **green** while raising some for your chapter!



We have been recycling for over 100 years. Join us today!

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Local Program Success

What's in it For Me?



By Tony Small
Local Program Success Manager
National FFA Organization

When talking to current or former students about why they enrolled in an agriculture class and joined FFA, you get some great stories. Most students' stories come back to the person who influenced them to commit to the challenge.

In many cases, it goes back to a friend, parent, sibling or someone they respect to help them make decisions. Key influencers, who know what getting involved in agricultural education and FFA does for students, can answer the question, "What's in it for me?"

You can use the question as a simple guide to assist in creating a strong recruitment and retention plan. There are a couple resources that will save you hours by providing ideas, tips, strategies and sample plans and forms.

Available Resources

The first resource for one-stop planning is the *FFA Guide to Recruitment and Retention*. The guide walks you through the entire process and even includes hard-to-find information, like overcoming roadblocks and step-by-step plans for a successful recruiting process.

The other resource that will prove helpful is the *Local Program Success Guide*, specifically the Marketing section. It contains promising practices

teachers have used to encourage students to enroll in agriculture and join FFA.

A special effort to continue sharing promising practices has been placed on the all-new "Educators Workroom" on the FFA website at [www.ffa.org/ageducators/]. The information on this page is designed for agriculture educators and contains many new and innovative tools to enhance Local Program Success.

The promising practices are located in the highlight section or the "Keys to Successful Agriculture Education." A brand new resource called "Rev It Up" will be unveiled to teachers next summer and will contain a special section titled "Student Marketing and Promotion Guide." The guide will contain new marketing strategies to attract students and work with those who can assist you in developing an even stronger, more visible program and chapter.

Retaining Students

While recruiting plans are important for drawing students into your program, retaining them is equally important. One huge step in retaining students is making sure they can already answer that question, "What's in it for me?"

Retaining students is sometimes overlooked as you get busy with activities and teaching. Many times students are asked to enroll for the next year in the middle of the current year.

For that reason, it is best to develop the retention plan before

the year ever starts and use it in coordination with the school plan. Your guidance counselors and school officials can assist you with those dates and processes to ensure you are in line with their student guidance plan.

By the time students are ready to make the decision to continue their agriculture enrollment and FFA membership, they need to have a plan for growth. This should contain their plans for future class and curriculum goals, plans for their SAE, award goals and their plans to achieve the next degree or leadership development opportunity in FFA.

Individual plan development and providing students with opportunities to grow are the keys to keeping them interested and successful in obtaining their goals. There may be nothing more satisfying to teachers than seeing those students who enter your program change, grow and complete the program then move on to post secondary training related to their goals. As we continue to strive towards seamless education and assist students with finding career paths to follow, it is vital to retain them and advance them to the next level of their education.

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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.



Making a Difference in Teacher Recruitment

i've often wondered why teachers are so passionate about the work they do with students, yet are often reluctant to encourage their top students to pursue a career in teaching.

I've come to the conclusion that many of the best teachers, proud of their work and equally proud of their profession, also have great humility. The thought that these top students might want to follow in their footsteps and pursue a career in teaching is sometimes surprising, and encouraging those students to become teachers may feel a bit too self-promoting. However, the reality is we need more agriscience teachers. These new teachers need to be the most capable teacher candidates available, and current teachers are in the best position to help identify and recruit

these bright teacher prospects into agricultural education. Here's how:

- Identify those students in your program who enjoy learning, perform well academically, have a sound understanding of and appreciation for agriculture, are leaders in your program, are good communicators, are achievement oriented and can solve problems and recognize opportunities.
- Find ways to engage these students in teaching opportunities – with their peers, younger students, community groups, parents and other supporters. Start with small, informal teaching scenarios and grow from there. Provide encouragement and support as they plan for and engage in these teaching episodes.
- Assuming you continue to see teaching potential, get them thinking about becoming an agriscience teacher, and provide the information and contacts they will need in making this decision. Bring



Dr. Ed Osborne,
Professor and Chair
Department of Agricultural
Education and
Communication
University of Florida

parents into the discussion and seek their support.

Share contact and background information on each of your teacher candidates with a faculty member in an agricultural education program at a university in your state. Partner with that person/program in recruiting your top students into the teacher preparation program. Arrange meetings between your teacher recruits and former students of your program who are now successful agriscience teachers. (Other young, successful teachers can also be strong role models.)

Share your love of teaching, let your enthusiasm show and help your teacher recruits experience the difference that an agriscience teacher can make in students' lives.



ffa

new horizons



THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL FFA ORGANIZATION

I N T H E C L A S S R O O M

December
Issue

As a way to help teachers use *FFA New Horizons* as a teaching tool, you'll begin seeing this box in *FFA Advisors Making a Difference*. In this space, FFA staff will identify key articles in the upcoming issue of *FFA New Horizons* and suggest strategies on how to use the articles in your classroom!

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Earning to Live

Making it Work:

- How to balance a job and college.

Promising Practices:

- Demonstrate steps taken in developing personal budget.

LifeKnowledge Lessons:

- HS36- Conducting a Job Search
- HS42- Life Balance

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Living to Serve

Cardboard City:

- Raising money for those who need it.

LifeKnowledge Lessons:

- MS60- Planning a Service Project
- HS103- Developing a Service-Leadership Attitude
- AHS41- Understanding the Role of Responsible Citizens

Page 28

Help on the Way:

- FFA chapters aid relief efforts for hurricane victims.

LifeKnowledge Lessons:

- MS57- Finding Opportunities to Make a Positive Change
- AHS25- Selflessness towards Others

APPLICATIONS
NOW AVAILABLE!

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members to be part
of a rich legacy—

The National FFA
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Over \$2 million in
scholarships is available,
and last year, nearly
one out of every four
students who applied
received a scholarship!

Applications must be
postmarked by
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Visit [http://www.ffa.org/
programs/scholarships/](http://www.ffa.org/programs/scholarships/)
to download
an application.

Scholarship books were
mailed at the end of
November. If you have not
yet received one, e-mail

scholarships@ffa.org
to request a copy.

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is in your hands]



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TeacherResources

Biotech Resources

From the National Science Foundation, find online courses, lab equipment, information on biotech in high school, and more at [\[www.bio-link.org\]](http://www.bio-link.org). A biotech news roundup includes articles on genes and a range of topics including anxiety, addiction, acne, cystic fibrosis, depression, muscles, sudden oak death, prostate cancer and others (click on the blue box entitled "Emerging Issues in Biotechnology").

USDA Grants Available

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES), announces a call for applications for the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program. Applications must be received by close of business no later than January 13, 2005 (5:00 p.m., Eastern Time).

The purpose of the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program is to promote and strengthen teaching programs in agriscience and agribusiness at secondary and 2-year postsecondary institutions, by enhancing curricula, increasing faculty teaching competencies, promoting higher education to prepare students for scientific and professional careers, incorporating agriscience or agribusiness subject matter into other instructional programs, facilitating joint initiatives among other educational institutions, and to respond to identified State, regional, national or international educational needs.

Applications may be submitted by eligible public secondary schools (projects supported in FY 2005 are limited to grade levels 9-12) and public or private, nonprofit junior or community colleges (projects limited to the associates degree). Applications will be evaluated by a peer review panel and awards will

be made competitively based upon evaluation criteria contained in the Request for Applications document. For the entire Request for Applications document, including instructions for submitting a proposal, click on: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/educationchallengesecondaryhep.html>.

New for the 2005 competition, award amounts have been increased. Applicants may now request up to \$35,000 for a single institution project, and up to \$50,000 for projects involving two or more institutions. Review the RFA document to determine project eligibility and proposal submission guidelines and format. Additional inquiries may be directed (e-mail preferred) to: Mr. P. Gregory Smith, National Program Leader, CSREES/Higher Education Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture; phone: (202) 720-1973; e-mail: gsmith@csrees.usda.gov.

Ag Ed Jobs Site

Are there any teaching, state staff or internship opportunities in your state? Post your agriculture-related job openings on the AG ED Job Posting website. Check it out at [\[www.ffa.org/statestaff/agedjobs/index.htm\]](http://www.ffa.org/statestaff/agedjobs/index.htm). For more information, contact Michele Gilbert at mgilbert@ffa.org.

REV It Up!

You'll be hearing the words, "REV It Up" in the coming months, and here's the reason. Thanks to grant monies from the USDA, the National FFA Organization will create and distribute a toolkit of new and redeveloped materials focusing on recruitment, engagement and volunteerism for rural youth. (The "REV" stands for Recruitment, Engagement and Volunteerism.) Be on the lookout for additional information about this exciting project this fall and winter. The toolkit's release is targeted for late spring 2005.

Turf and Ag Equipment Technicians Needed

Have you driven by a local golf course and thought of the cadre of technicians involved to entice golfers to play there? Does a drive-by of local machinery dealerships remind you of the technicians working there? Are your students aware of the careers in turf and agricultural equipment?

Nationwide a shortage of certified technicians in turf and agricultural equipment has been identified. Job offers regularly arrive from golf course superintendents to turf and agricultural equipment technology schools. Salary offers from \$22,000 to \$40,000 are common. Top turf and agricultural equipment technicians are employed year round.

Help your students become aware of these opportunities.

1. Meet with local golf course superintendents and agricultural equipment dealers to review employment needs.
2. Link your students to these career areas via the SAE program.
3. Research sources of turf and agricultural technician training

For more information on this subject visit the website [\[www.abe.psu.edu/TAE\]](http://www.abe.psu.edu/TAE), a source of turf and agricultural equipment technician training.

Be prepared for the unexpected!



Who knows what unexpected costs you may find if you don't have a risk management plan for your SAE

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.

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.

The National FFA Organization affirms its belief in the value of all human beings and seeks diversity in its membership, leadership and staff as an equal opportunity employer.

Enter the 2005 National FFA Organization Risk Management Essay Contest and tell us how you managed the trials and triumphs of your SAE. **YOU COULD WIN AN ALL-EXPENSE-PAID TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C., FOR YOU AND YOUR ADVISOR.**

Working with your Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) project has taught you that risk is part of any agricultural undertaking. Having a solid plan for managing these risks is crucial to success.

Please visit www.ffa.org/programs/riskmgt for contest rules of entry. To obtain a copy of the USDA Risk Management Agency's resource booklet, have your advisor contact the National FFA Organization at 317.802.6060 or e-mail riskmanagement@ffa.org.

This contest is sponsored by the Risk Management Agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All entries must be postmarked by Jan. 31, 2005. Send your entry to the Risk Essay Contest, National FFA Organization, 6060 FFA Drive, P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268.

RISK
management



2003–2004 T-Shirt Contest

FFA has just finished the 2003-2004 T-Shirt Contest and is pleased to announce the five winning chapters earned more than \$20,000. This is a great opportunity for chapters to earn money, so please get involved. The deadline for t-shirt designs is March 15, 2005. For more information, contact Dawn Sharp, dsharp@ffa.org. This year's participants were:

- Wellington FFA, Ohio
- Farmington FFA, Minn.
- Belleville FFA, Kan.
- David Crockett FFA, Tenn.
- North Carolina Collegiate FFA, N.C.

FFA Receives Indiana Excellence Award

The National FFA Organization received top honors recently at the 2004 BKD Indiana Excellence Awards. FFA received the Gold Award in the Not-for-Profit and Government category and was named the overall winner for the 2004 BKD Indiana Excellence Awards.

FFA received these prestigious awards for the electronic membership project, which replaced an inaccurate manual membership roster structure with an electronic one that includes an online process. Among the benefits of the new membership system are expected savings of \$2.2 million over the next 10 years and more efficient and speedy delivery of the *FFA New Horizons* magazine.

"We're very pleased to be recognized and receive the overall BKD Indiana Excellence Award," says Tom Kapostasy, division director of business services for FFA. "Electronic membership was a very large project that required strong contributions from many functions. We were able to reach our financial objective and make the new system 'easier than paper' for more than 10,000 agriculture teachers across country."

The BKD Indiana Excellence Awards are pre-

sented by *Indiana Business* magazine. The title sponsor is BKD, an accounting firm based in Indiana. The awards recognize business excellence and reward organizations for demonstrating a commitment to excellence through the involvement of product, service and business practice.

Home-Schooled Students

The National FFA Organization is seeking information regarding how many of its members are home-schooled and what structures might be in place to meet their needs. If you have a home-schooled student in your program, please contact Anna Melodia via e-mail at amelodia@ffa.org.

Bernie Staller Endowment

The National FFA Foundation would like to thank the individuals, companies and state associations that contributed to the Bernie Staller Endowment. The support-honoring and recognizing Bernie's years of service to FFA members, agricultural education teachers, agriculture professionals, alumni, the agribusiness community and many others is greatly appreciated.

Proceeds from the endowment will be used to provide an annual \$2,500 scholarship for an FFA member who is entering college, based on financial need. The recipient must be majoring in agricultural education and be planning a career teaching agriculture at the secondary school level.

If you are interested in receiving information about making a contribution to the endowment, contact Tammy Meyer at 317-802-4416 or tmeyer@ffa.org.

West Virginia Teacher of the Year

An agriculture instructor/FFA advisor from Pleasants County, W. Va., has been named the 2005 West Virginia Teacher of the Year. Jason Hughes, a teacher at St. Mary's High School,

was chosen for the award from six finalists that came from a field of 50 nominees in the entire education profession in the state.

Dr. David Stewart, the West Virginia State Superintendent, made the announcement during an awards ceremony Sept. 7. "Mr. Hughes exemplifies the meaning of master teacher not only by his leadership skills, but also by displaying an extraordinary dedication to his students," Stewart says.

Hughes is an advocate for community involvement and has completed numerous community outreach projects with his students. One of his greatest accomplishments was founding the Pleasants County Agricultural Youth Fair. Since its inauguration in 2000, the fair has grown to more than 50 youth exhibitors and includes stage entertainment, pony pulls and timber sports, attracting thousands of visitors from the surrounding communities. Through his agricultural classes, Hughes and his students also provide a free countywide water-testing program, in which they test water samples from more than 50 residents. Once the testing is complete, the results are mailed to the citizen.

"As an agricultural science teacher and FFA advisor, I get the unique opportunity of having many of my students in class for up to four years," says Hughes. "Four years in the classroom and lab setting, along with countless FFA events allows my students and me to form lasting relationships."

Hughes will represent West Virginia in the National Teacher of the Year completion. As the state winner, Hughes received an educational technology package from the Smarter Kids Foundation valued at \$14,300. The Teacher of the Year award is sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers and is the longest ongoing awards program honoring classroom teachers in the country. The St. Mary's FFA chapter is one of 60 in the state of West Virginia. There are 4,593 student members statewide. The West Virginia FFA Association was chartered in 1929.



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Look for your next issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* in January. It will feature stories on National FFA Week, as well as provide teaching resources and FFA news.