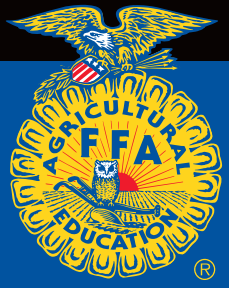


▶ READ THE STORIES FROM TOP 30 CHAPTER FINALISTS

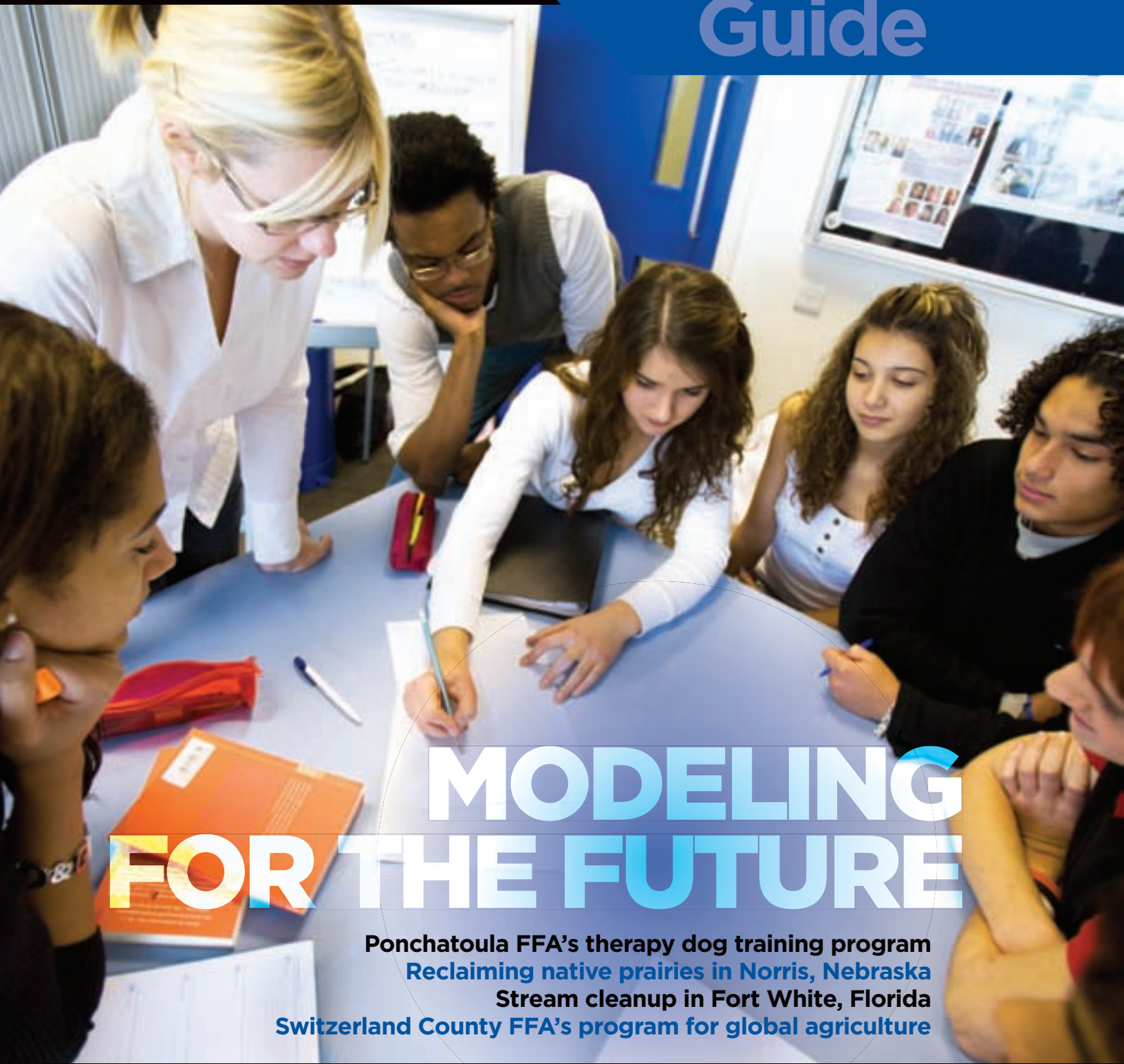


www.ffa.org

THE 2008 FFA CHAPTER

Innovators

Guide



MODELING FOR THE FUTURE

Ponchatoula FFA's therapy dog training program
Reclaiming native prairies in Norris, Nebraska
Stream cleanup in Fort White, Florida
Switzerland County FFA's program for global agriculture

SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMS ▶ COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ▶ STUDENT LEADERSHIP



Dear educators and administrators:

Why is this guide an important resource for you? Academic excellence, high student graduation rates, and successful teaching models are paramount for all of us in our quest to address local and national educational standards and goals. This guide provides information and examples that tie into the following:

- ▶ National education standards
- ▶ Foundation skills and competencies outlined by the U.S. Labor Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills
- ▶ The Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets (assets proven to be essential for youth to become successful)
- ▶ LifeKnowledge lesson plans (teaching modules based on experiential, whole-person learning and multiple intelligence learning paradigms)

It is not our purpose in the guide to show research validating the importance of integrating real-life applications into classroom learning. It is our purpose, however, to show how it can be and has been done. If for no other reason then, we hope you will agree that this guide is a valuable teaching resource.

Sincerely,



**National Chapter Award Program Staff,
National FFA Organization**

TOYOTA

Spring 2009

Dear FFA members:

Toyota congratulates the award winning national FFA chapters featured in this guide. The winners of the 2008 National Chapter Awards are truly models of innovation. We encourage you to read about these winners and their outstanding achievements. We challenge every FFA chapter to learn from them and to strive for similar success.

These award winning FFA chapters are not only dedicated to innovation, they are true leaders in their communities. We all know America needs experienced and committed leaders in all of its sectors. Whether you go on to farm full time, work in agribusiness, or teach and inspire young people like your Ag instructors do, America needs you. We need your commitment to keeping our world fed, our industry strong, and our communities healthy and viable.

That's one reason Toyota supports the National Chapter Awards. This comprehensive program encourages and recognizes student participation and achievement in three key areas of development: student, chapter, and community. If your chapter is not featured this year, we hope it will be in 2009.

Congratulations again, and we look forward to hearing of your continued success!

Sincerely,

Helen Carroll
Manager, Community Relations
Toyota Motor Manufacturing, NA



What is a Chapter Program of Activities?

The FFA Chapter Program of Activities (POAs) is an annual roadmap that helps to chart the year's events. Each year, the National Chapter Award program recognizes chapters for outstanding efforts in planning and meeting the objectives set in their Program of Activities. The POA and the award program have three divisions—Student Development, Chapter Development and Community Development.

Awards for Success

During the national FFA convention each fall, the 10 highest scoring chapters in each division receive the Models of Innovation Award. The 2008 Models of Innovation Award Winners are presented in this Guide, as well as their unique stories in pursuing their goals.

The Models of Innovation Awards are presented to three-star award chapters in each division. Each chapter receives a special recognition plaque at the national FFA convention. Special recognition is also given at the national FFA convention to the top-rated middle school FFA chapter.

The chapters with top recognition from the National FFA Organization are ones that identified goals and objectives, created workable plans and not only got results—but also learned from their activities.

How to use this guide

Read these chapters' stories of success and use their ideas as starting points for your own chapter. Look for needs within your community and work with your advisor and members to create programs that address those needs. We're rooting for your chapter to become a Models of Innovation Award winner too!



MODELING EXCELLENCE

The Best of the Best

Each of these outstanding chapters receives a special recognition plaque at the national FFA convention. The top-rated middle school is also acknowledged at the FFA national convention for its superb performance.



► Chapter Development Category

Switzerland County FFA Chapter	Vevay, Indiana
Arkansas City FFA Chapter	Arkansas City, Kansas
Brooksville Senior FFA Chapter	Brooksville, Florida
Chicago Ag Sciences FFA Chapter	Chicago, Illinois
Hanford FFA Chapter	Hanford, California
Jeff Davis High FFA Chapter	Hazelhurst, Georgia
Ridgemont FFA Chapter	Ridgeway, Ohio
Screven County High FFA Chapter	Sylvania, Georgia
Tri-Valley FFA Chapter	Grahamsville, New York
Tulare Western FFA Chapter	Tulare, California

► Community Development Category

Norris FFA Chapter	Firth, Nebraska
Platte Valley FFA Chapter	Kersey, Colorado
Pontiac FFA Chapter	Pontiac, Illinois
Shenandoah FFA Chapter	Middletown, Indiana
Sibley-Ocheyedan FFA Chapter	Sibley, Iowa
Tri-Valley FFA Chapter	Grahamsville, New York
Waupaca FFA Chapter	Waupaca, Wisconsin
Willow Springs FFA Chapter	Willow Springs, Missouri
Wolfe County FFA Chapter	Campton, Kentucky
Woodlan FFA Chapter	Woodburn, Indiana

► Student Development Category

Ponchatoula FFA Chapter	Ponchatoula, Louisiana
Centennial FFA Chapter	Utica, Nebraska
Hanford FFA Chapter	Hanford, California
Kamiakin FFA Chapter	Kennewick, Washington
Liberty FFA Chapter	Joes, Colorado
North- Linn FFA Chapter	Troy Mills, Iowa
Schuyler Central FFA Chapter	Schulyer, Nebraska
Southeast Manatee Senior FFA Chapter	Bradenton, Florida
Vernon-Verona Sherill FFA Chapter	Verona, New York
Wauseon FFA Chapter	Wauseon, Ohio

► Outstanding Middle School

Fort White Middle School FFA Chapter	Fort White, Florida
--------------------------------------	---------------------

TABLE OF CONTENTS



10



16



20



4

COVER STORIES

4 Ponchatoula FFA Therapy Dog Training Program

It's amazing when programs evolve and take shape from the natural abilities of the students in the classroom. Ponchatoula FFA learned exactly that lesson when developing their therapy dog and specialty dog treat company.

10 Restoring Nebraska Prairie to its Natural State

Norris FFA worked to create a 70-acre outdoor learning lab, returning general land into its native state of beautiful prairie. Five separate ecosystems were planted for research including a switchgrass biofuels area.

16 Fort White Middle School Strong in Community Leadership

Middle school is the perfect time to become active in FFA and Fort White Middle School sets a high standard for service in their community.

20 Applying Trends in Global Agriculture

Switzerland County FFA teamed up with Brazilian students in a long-term student exchange to learn about technologies and advancements in global agriculture.

23 FFA Program of Activities

POA ideas and tips



Naturally Evolving

PONCHATOULA HIGH SCHOOL FFA MEMBERS
TAKE THEIR PROGRAM TO THE NEXT LEVEL
WITH SPECIALTY DOG TREATS COMPANY.





Sometimes the best business ideas happen by accident.

That’s what Ponchatoula High School FFA members discovered through a series of happy events—when they let their programs develop naturally and used the special capabilities of each student in the classroom.

Since 20 percent of Ponchatoula FFA members have special needs, advisors Alice Dubois and Donna Winborn are continuously looking for ways to provide all members the opportunity to participate. The teachers take an active role in empowering students by focusing on their strengths, and stay open to the needs and unique capabilities of their students in order to build learning experiences.

“You can always go a step above. You can’t look at disabilities as something to hold you back, but as something unique to offer the world,” explained senior advisor Alice Dubois.

Dubois left the brainstorming up to the imaginations of 15 FFA students, who wanted to develop open, inclusive projects that would bring together a diverse agriculture class made up of both FFA members and special needs students. In a collaborative environment based on sensitivity training and openness, they decided to build their classroom program centered on managing the care and training of therapy dogs. The program would allow students of all abilities to pair up and learn the complexity and importance of training service dogs, all while gaining marketable skills.

Therapy dogs are specially trained dogs that provide affection and comfort to people who are in distress or in need of companionship. The demand for therapy dogs has increased over the years, as they are especially useful in hospitals, retirement homes, and during times of disaster. Health care professionals use dogs for the therapeutic effects of animal companionship, and to relieve stress.

The Ponchatoula therapy dogs were made up of various breeds and sizes, and all students in the class came together to learn how to pet, brush, wash, dry, feed—and give simple obedience lessons. By the end of the project, students of all abilities were able to develop the animals as service dogs.

But students gained more than marketable work skills. Caring for the dogs gave students of all abilities a common ground to come together and achieve as a team. Partnered with “buddies,” the students worked with one another over the months, creating a special bond where communication lines were crossed, and differences in abilities overcome. Each student realized the importance of reaching

out, learning about differences, and focusing on the strengths of each individual in the room.

As the Ponchatoula members realized the success of their therapy dog training program—they had an idea that would take their already successful project to the next level. Keeping with their evolving program that grew out of members’ ideas and capabilities in the diverse classroom, they were inspired to start making dog treats for the dogs—which then in turn launched the idea to start a business.

The multidisciplinary classroom came together to form The Special Treats Company, to plan all aspects of manufacturing and distributing specialty dog treats, everything from buying ingredients and baking, to advertising and packaging. Students formed a “corporation” and divided roles so everyone could participate, whether working on online marketing, or packaging the dog treats and preparing them for sale.

The Special Treats Company did well, but not without a few hurdles that wound up being great learning experiences as the students learned the challenges that face any startup business.

“We realized how complicated running a business is,” said chapter member Caitlin Lambert. Added member Tess Moore, “There’s so much that goes into it, not just the ingredients and baking for the dog treats, but marketing and accounting. We had to split into teams to handle all the parts of the business.”

Suddenly, the community took notice of the students’ efforts, and a few local articles resulted in more sales and the opportunity to market the treats online. As the business boomed, so did the student’s feelings of success. With the money generated from the Special Treats Company, Ponchatoula FFA members were then able to purchase the special needs students their own FFA jackets, which were presented at the year-end banquet.

The Ponchatoula FFA believes that they can always do more, so in the evolution of this classroom project there was one more idea they thought of to broaden the experience. Students were so moved by the life changing experience throughout the year, they decided to film a documentary about the therapy dog training program and creation of the Special Treats Company.

The end goal is to distribute the video to other schools, to help inspire them to build their projects around inclusiveness, and realize the success of relying on the potential locked inside of every student – no matter their needs. The video tries to capture what is turning into an experience of a lifetime, one that each and every student will always remember.

“You can always go a step above. You can’t look at disabilities as something to hold you back, but as something unique to offer the world,” explained senior advisor Alice Dubois.



BRANDENTON HS FFA

Career Fair Draws out the Best

► The Career Technical Student Organization Leadership Rally brought together over 400 people from organizations across Manatee county in central Florida. From the words of featured speakers, discussions with one another, and team building activities, student officers and advisors attained skills to further build their organizations.

While all who attended recognized the success of the rally, less evident may have been the hours of planning and logistical work, all performed by members of the Southeast Manatee Senior FFA of Bradenton, Florida. This planning started six months before the rally itself, when FFA members began coordinating event details with administration officials at the local high school and with organizations across the county. In addition to handling administrative details, FFA members worked with former state and national officers to develop the curriculum for the event and invited the speakers who implemented that curriculum. Finally, FFA members took care of the minutia of the event: collating curriculum, filling out forms, and writing thank you notes.

All that hard work continues to bear fruit, as the participants use the skills gleaned at the rally to strengthen and grow their Career Technical Student organizations. In turn, these stronger organizations will better serve their membership in achieving success in technical careers.



WOLFE

WOLFE CO HS FFA

Educating Communities on Meth Labs

► With the growth of labs used to make methamphetamines on farms, rural residents cannot ignore the problem of drug abuse or dismiss it as an inner city issue. Residents of Wolfe County know this fact all too well. In 2007, Wolfe County had a population of less than 7500. Wolfe County also had a reported 25 meth labs. All of these labs were on farms or in apartments, located in close proximity to where children play. In addition to the well known dangers of drug addiction, these labs pose a further threat of explosions and chemical waste.

The Wolfe County FFA tackled this problem aggressively through education and increased involvement of law enforcement. Over 500 community members

attended “Keep Meth off the Farm” night where they learned how to identify a meth lab. FFA members reached more of the community by distributing 1000 “Keep Meth off the Farm” pamphlets and providing 750 people the information to properly report a suspected meth lab. Law enforcement officials conducted “meth lab checks” at approximately 100 properties, which resulted in the discovery of two meth labs on abandoned farm property. These combined efforts have brought significant results: the elimination of five meth labs. With the tools the Wolfe County FFA has given the community, they hope to further cut the number of meth labs in Wolfe County—one day, to zero.

WAUSEON HS FFA

Intercultural Experience

► Students from the Wauseon FFA Chapter in Wauseon, Ohio did an intensive exchange and educational program focusing on the agricultural and cultural landscape of the Dominican Republic.

With 30 percent of the land in the Dominican Republic dedicated to crop development and trade, students from Wauseon gained a new perspective on international agriculture—coordinating an intra-chapter effort to recruit participants, ensuring the project was representative of the National FFA and its fellowship as a whole.

Tackling nearly 10 months of planning, over 20 FFA members, including students from a Minnesota chapter, engaged in 15 educational modules while touring the

Dominican Republic—learning and comparing local cultures, agribusiness, and educational systems to those within the United States. Working with local hosts on tours and projects was an excellent vehicle for strengthening the students’ bilingual skills. The two chapters also teamed up to exchange ideas to bring back to their own school projects in the U.S., and completed a service project while in the country—a one-day beautification event to plant trees and improve stream water flow in a church camp.

Some of the other diverse and valuable educational tours included trips to a sugarcane processor, educational institutions, a fruit plantation, and cultural centers to learn about the rich history of the country.



Want to know more about the FFA?
Visit www.ffa.org



KAMIAKIN

KAMIAKIN HS FFA

Form and Function

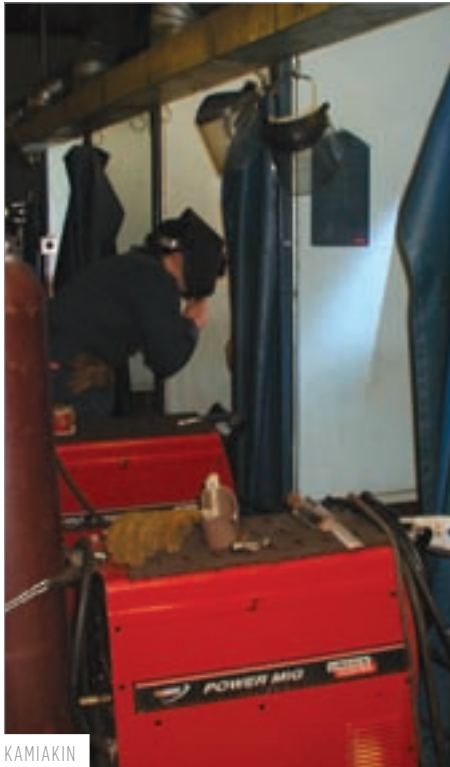
► A pheasant snuggled down into the lush grass of a meadow. An oxy-acetylene welder. When do these two things come into contact? At the Metal Arts Career Development Event, organized by the Kamiakin FFA of Kennewick, Washington, where a table top sculpture of a pheasant scene was created with welding tools. Through the creation of such works of art, FFA members practiced their welding skills, demonstrated welding techniques, promoted welding as a career, developed relationships with local welding experts, and raised money for the Washington State FFA foundation.

Eight chapters participated in the event, a competition to create metal sculptures. The Kamiakin FFA partnered with the Columbia Basin College welding program, who hosted the event. They also invited five

industry experts to judge the event and developed the judging criteria.

Two teams from the Kamiakin FFA competed. Participants demonstrated their skills with such various tools as oxy-acetylene welders, MIG welders, chop saws, and plasma arcs. The judges provided feedback to help members improve their skills and awarded prizes that the Kamiakin FFA had procured by donation. Chris Mitchell, the head of the Columbia Basin College welding program, praised FFA members for their professionalism and work ethic.

The Kamiakin FFA coordinated with a local gallery to host a silent auction for the twelve pieces produced in the event. Mike Berg, gallery owner recognized the high quality of the art work. The auction raised \$340 for the Washington State FFA Foundation.



KAMIAKIN

HANFORD HS FFA

Marketable Skills for the Future

► Members of the Hanford FFA may have been among the few to find success on the stock market this year. Participating in the Mock Stocks and Futures program, some members turned a mock profit of \$120,000. While the profit may have been mock, the lessons learned from the experience were very real. Through old stand-by newspapers and newer tools such as downloads of CNBC's Mad Money, students learned how to decode the complex facts and figures of the stock market and to understand market trends. Some students even found themselves assisting their parents with their newfound knowledge.

At the Agriculture Showcase night, members of the Hanford FFA had their eyes on a different set of numbers: enrollment. One hundred prospective members and their parents got to try their hands at skills developed through the FFA, such as creating a corsage, judging a class of trees, demonstrating parliamentary

procedure, and welding. Members also assisted three incoming out-of-district students with the paperwork they need to enroll in the agricultural program. All this work paid dividends in the form of new members: 24 new sophomore members in addition to the many potential freshman members.

No doubt some of those new freshman members will be inspired to follow the example of 19 seniors who were the first Hanford Agricultural Program Graduates with Distinction. To receive this honor, students earned a GPA of at least 3.0 and no less than a B in all their agricultural classes, held four years active FFA membership, participated in two state level activities, and managed a successful SAE. The sash the 19 Graduates with Distinction wore to the Hanford High School graduation displayed their four years of high school achievement. The college scholarship they received as part of the award will assist them in their future achievement.



WAUSEON

SCHUYLER CENTRAL HS FFA

Career Road Show

► By being active in FFA, members demonstrate their focus on career goals. Through “Road to Success,” Schuyler Nebraska FFA members promoted that type of focus in their classmates. They also generated interest in careers in agricultural and technical fields.

The chapter partnered with the local community college to bring a career trailer to the high school campus. They promoted and scheduled visits to the trailer not only for their fellow high school classmates, but also worked with the principal of the local

SCHUYLER CENTRAL



grade school to ensure that eighth graders would have the opportunity to start thinking about their future careers.

All Schuyler Grade School eighth-graders and 175 high school students toured the trailer, where they learned about careers in such fields as auto and agricultural diesel mechanics, irrigation, heating and air conditioning, and construction. After touring the trailer, students had the opportunity to meet with a guidance counselor and discuss what classes they would need to prepare for various careers. Thus students could not only determine what career they might enjoy, but also discover how to become qualified to get a job in that field. Twenty students met with the guidance counselor and began planning for their future career.



VERNON VERONA SHERRILL

VERNON VERONA SHERRILL FFA

Sweet Rewards

► Members of the Vernon-Verona-Sherill FFA Chapter can tell you firsthand that hard work pays off—and the rewards are sweet. For them, maple syrup production turned out to be both a financial and career-building success.

Starting in the cold month of January, more than 30 junior and senior high school members of the chapter worked together to set up and maintain a complicated sap tubing system that consisted of 700 collection buckets and 400 tubing spouts, in order to collect raw sap from trees. Since 10 gallons of sap is needed to distill only one gallon of maple syrup, the students needed to create a large-scale operation. A local sugar bush woodlot served as their collection site. The group used a processing facility set up on the school grounds to process and manufacture the syrup.

The students put in hours at the production facility both after school and on weekends, because sap collection and syrup processing needs constant attention and maintenance. True maple syrup must boil down at least fifteen times in large industrial pots before it becomes the high quality syrup that's so prized in specialty stores and groceries.

The FFA members managed every aspect of maple syrup production and the chapter made over 200 gallons, which was bottled, labeled, and put through NYS Department of Agriculture grading before being put on the market. The rich, sweet maple syrup was marketed by e-commerce, through the school system, and at various fairs and shows in the community—setting an incredible profit of \$16,011, which was invested back into FFA projects.



VERNON VERONA SHERRILL

SCREVEN CO HS FFA

Beauty is in the Eye

► Miss America step aside.

A major dose of humor was behind an unusual community fundraiser held by the Screven County High FFA Chapter in Sylva, Georgia. Highly promoted by the community affairs committee, the chapter staged a “reverse beauty pageant,” an event that included male FFA members who participated in both an evening wear and talent competition.

The committee researched beauty pageant rules and customs, involved local “celebrities” to serve as judges in the contest, and heavily publicized the event within the community. Much planning and preparation went into coordinating the event, including several rehearsals. Teachers, staff, and even the principal all joined in on the fun. A local band made up of FFA members served as entertainment during intermissions of the Reverse Beauty Pageant—and crowns and trophies were awarded to the “winners.”

With over 250 students, parents, and guests in attendance at the December 8th event, the fundraiser was a huge community-supported success. Through ticket sales and a “people’s choice” pay-to-vote system, chapter members collected \$500 from the event—and presented a check to the United Way’s annual campaign on behalf of the Screven County High FFA Chapter.



SCREVEN

TULARE WESTERN HS FFA

Just in Time for Thanksgiving

► With over 300 students in the program, Tulare Western FFA Chapter in Tulare, California decided to get creative about fundraising this year in order to support programs and development for their chapter.

Just in time for Thanksgiving, the chapter decided to manage a large-scale, deep pit beef fundraiser. Students created a tight marketing and business plan which included distributing 400 flyers to the community, heavily marketing the event to other students and to teachers, and negotiating a solid purchase price for the meat from a local meat locker to ensure ample profit. In the weeks before Thanksgiving, the chapter



TULARE WESTERN

actively took orders and organized them electronically. Based on the demand, they then worked with the local meat locker to buy 3,500 lbs of meat.

No easy task, the professional effort included wrapping and cooking in a deep pit over 3,500 pounds of beef. After a full day in the pit, the meat was ready to distribute to customers by seven FFA member volunteers. The 10-lb orders fetched \$35/lb. As a result of careful planning, the chapter was able to meet and exceed its original fundraising goal by 40 percent—and raised over \$5,000 in profit for chapter programs.

NORTH-LINN FFA

Aquaculture in the Midwest

► How do you learn firsthand about indigenous species of Malaysia, while studying in the Midwest?

That’s what students set out to do when the North-Linn FFA Chapter in Troy Mills, Iowa developed a cooperative that studied, cultivated, and documented the Giant Malaysian Freshwater Prawn. The high school students also had a chance to create, distribute and market their own documentary-style educational video about their experience. The result was a video on the species that was marketed statewide to Iowa educators, making the content available for hundreds of other agriculture and science students.

In order to undertake the unique project, the students developed the “Rub-a-Plump” Shrimp Cooperative, a member-owned collective complete with administrative rules and bylaws. For their focus of study, the Giant Malaysian Freshwater Prawn was chosen for its biologic features



NORTH-LINN

in cultivation. The prawn begins its life in brackish water, but then lives entirely in freshwater through its adult life. Originally from Malaysia and the Indo-Pacific, the prawn is a popular food source that is commercially cultivated in the U.S.

For the six-month project, members split into several teams, one focused on cultivating a crop of prawns suitable for consumption—and the other involved with storyboarding, planning and writing the full educational video. When complete, the video and experience was then presented to more than 500 students during an agriculture awareness day, supported by two dozen student-led presentations. By also selling the video to teachers as part of an educational package, the chapter earned enough profits to maintain and broaden the program for next year.



Going Native

NORRIS FFA
RE-ESTABLISHES 70
ACRES OF NATURAL
PRAIRIE IN NEBRASKA,
CREATING A DIVERSE
LEARNING LAB FOR
STUDENTS AND
COMMUNITY.



There is only a small percentage of native prairie land left in the U.S.

Nebraska is the home to a rich prairie history—its diverse ecosystem of native grasses and wildflowers serve as the perfect homing ground for wildlife such as pheasant, quail, and deer. Yet, with centuries of settlement, and decades of farming and development, much of what is called “native prairie” is no longer in existence in Nebraska.

When the Norris FFA Chapter teamed up with area nonprofits for prairie preservation efforts, they knew they were helping to re-establish some of Nebraska’s great heritage, all while gaining first-hand insight into the process of replanting land and growing it back to its original native state.

Under the direction and help of advisors Kristyn Harms and Doug Malone, Norris FFA worked with local and regional Pheasants Forever groups to create the Norris Prairie Project Committee. By organizing community support, the committee worked to successfully re-establish over 70 acres of native Nebraska prairie.

The first step was identifying land for the Prairie Project. Luckily, an unused tract of land owned by the school system was already within short walking distance of the high school. Being former pasture land, it was the perfect candidate for a re-establishment project.

With the site identified, the next step was a large-scale project that needed a lot of muscle. It was truly an effort of the entire community, with members securing thousands in donations ranging from seed purchases, tractors, to the use of tilling equipment. Parents and community members came together to help out along the way. The use of special excavation equipment was even donated from a former FFA student with his own excavating business.

“In our FFA program, service is one of the biggest influences. We have a lot of focus on community activities,” said advisor Kristyn Harms. “Whether it’s helping out area farmers that are in need, or something like the prairie project, the chapter provides students a lot of opportunity for community involvement.”

The Norris FFA Chapter planned the prairie with five different ecosystems, giving students experience

working with different prairie habitats. The lab included short grass, immediate grass, tall grass, wetlands, and an area for quail cover. Overall, 12 different types of grasses and 40 forbs were planted with \$16,000 of seed that had been donated by supporting groups.

Spring was the perfect time to plan for the tilling and planting of the land – so much of April was devoted to coordinating resources, recruiting volunteers, and delegating work. Planting day happened in May, with members working nine hours to till, prepare the soil, and plant the seed for the prairie project. 75 percent of the chapter membership participated in the events.

Students and officers also planned a media promotion of the project in various outlets. Stories appeared in local newspapers and a special feature ran in National Pheasants Forever magazine. Since re-establishing native prairie is critical in helping to create natural habitats for wildlife, especially in promoting the growth of the local bird population, the Norris Prairie Project members also put together a PowerPoint for sharing and educating other groups about the benefits of re-establishment. The presentation was given at the Nebraska Game and Parks Educators meetings, as well as Pheasants Forever meetings.

Now, the 70-acre prairie is a permanent installment to the community. The land is conveniently within walking distance for the general school population, and has become a hands-on tool in a diverse number of classroom experiences in agriculture and the natural sciences. The community at large also enjoys access to the outdoor laboratory, not to mention the wildlife that now calls it home.

The Norris FFA actually has plans to take the ecosystem learning even further. When they planned the prairie, they planted 20 acres of the area in switchgrass, where they are developing a biofuels research area for future FFA-related projects. Prairie grass has a high potential for being used as fuel, and switchgrass can easily be turned into ethanol for a green source of energy. Students will soon do research projects to learn how natural grasses can be grown and used for clean energy, keeping the chapter moving toward the future.

“In our FFA program, service is one of the biggest influences. We have a lot of focus on community activities,” said advisor Kristyn Harms.

TRI VALLEY CENTRAL HS FFA

Agricultural Experience in Ireland

► With a rich agricultural history, the rolling hills of the Emerald Isle will prove to be a lifelong memory and learning experience for members of the Tri-Valley FFA Chapter in Grahamsville, New York.

International travel isn't necessarily common for the people of Grahamsville, as much of the community is poor and travel is a luxury. But the Tri-Valley FFA wanted to realize the dream of learning about agriculture in an international setting, so four members of the FFA met and presented to

the New York Board of Education—and gained permission to hold a Spring Break overseas tour to Ireland.

Student members and alumni worked together to raise \$4,500 for the students to travel, and used a well-respected Internet travel site and resources from the U.S. Travel Board to economize on costs and plan for the trip.

The chapter tailored the trip itinerary for the unique interests of its participants—and

to study the differences in the rich history of Irish agribusiness versus that within the United States. From watching peat cut by hand to working with sheep, the trip to the rolling hills of Ireland gave each student a wider vision of international agriculture. With their ingenuity in budget and itinerary planning, the Tri-Valley FFA is already planning another international agricultural tour, this time to Australia and New Zealand.



TRI VALLEY CENTRAL

LIBERTY



LIBERTY HS FFA

Keeping with Tradition

► Experiencing traditional agriculture production was becoming increasingly difficult for the members of Liberty FFA Chapter in Joes, Colorado. With many students no longer coming from strictly agriculture production backgrounds, the chapter officers needed to get creative in developing successful production-based SAE's.

By changing up their programs, they were able to do just that.

Chapter officers called the project the FFA Bottle Calves Giveaway, which was held during FFA Week. Potential FFA members and current FFA members with underdeveloped SAEs were encouraged to fill out an application for a calf drawing. Local dairies were happy

to help pitch in by donating baby bull calves to the FFA program.

The giveaway's success with non-members was remarkable. The new program drew participation from 30 percent of the school's general population and led to the completion of a successful SAE. Josh Behrendensen, the Freshman FFA who won the drawing, successfully raised the calf to adulthood—the bottle calf growing to weigh over 900lbs.

The FFA Bottle Calves Giveaway proved to be a successful program to help jumpstart FFA interest within the school's general population, generate wider interest in agriculture, all while bringing the students back to the true roots of agriculture and FFA membership.

RIDGEMONT HS FFA

Fast Times at Ridgemont High

► Eight hour days. Hallways lined with lockers. Countless books to read through.

Many high school students experience a serious case of the doldrums coming back from a summer full of freedom and fun. Thanks to the efforts of the Ridgemont FFA Chapter in Ridgeway, Ohio,

this year's first semester began with a special back-to-school treat to boost the morale of the entire student body.

Starting in May with plenty of time for planning, chapter members teamed up with various student organizations including Band, Student Council, staff and other

administration in order to plan a "Welcome Back to Fast Times at Ridgemont High" pep rally to kick off the coming school year in August. Each year, the collaboration between student groups creates co-ownership for the yearly event—and fosters a fever-pitch enthusiasm across the entire student body, as everyone comes back ready to welcome a new year.

With welcome banners and motivational signs, a procession through the

CENTENNIAL HS FFA

Mascot Promotes Agricultural Literacy

► In one Centennial FFA committee meeting, a member joked he would be a great public speaker—if “only he could wear a mask.”

While it sounded like a joke at first, the resourceful members of the Nebraska FFA Chapter took the idea to the limit. They’d been tossing around different plans, wanting to find interesting ways to create a non-threatening environment to develop leadership skills amongst their members.

After some quick brainstorming, the idea of “Corney the Leadership Cow” was born—an agricultural mascot that provided a kind of “mask” behind which fellow members could practice public relations and speaking skills. With Corney, the chapter visited area elementary schools, fairs, community outreach efforts and other public events to promote agricultural literacy. The events were centered around activities that would exercise members’ leadership skills, whether in small group settings, large group public speaking events, or one-on-one discussions.

All of the students that worked with Corney felt much more at ease with public speaking afterward and almost a fourth of the FFA membership participated in public speaking events. Now, the cow has become locally famous as the face and mascot of the Centennial FFA program. He’s a regular guest at local sporting events and was even featured in two local newspapers.

CENTENNIAL



CHICAGO

CHICAGO HS OF AG SCIENCE

Fostering a Shared Culture of Diversity

► The Chicagoland area is well-known for its diversity. Culture is like a mosaic—a product of the dozens of metropolitan ethnic neighborhoods, with sights, cuisine, and customs that are distinct from one another.

Members of the Chicago Ag Sciences FFA Chapter wanted to generate a deeper appreciation for one another’s distinct identities and take advantage of being able to learn from the culturally diverse backgrounds of its members. From this idea came “A Taste of Ethnicity,” a month-long event that drew 100 percent member participation.

A program committee coordinated the event to include a series of presentations, followed by a celebration during FFA week. Twelve parents also pitched in to create five

customized programs that educated members on lifestyles and culture, performed skits, and shared stories to deepen the group’s understanding of one another’s unique backgrounds. At the end of the month, sophomore members prepared cuisine from eight different cultural groups for sampling and sharing during the celebration.

The dynamic presentations served as the perfect collaborative space for students to take a leadership role and create shared understanding between FFA members, while fostering diversity and making their school a better place. As a final project, a collaborative ethnic quilt was the perfect symbol for the “mosaic” of cultures coming together—as each member created a square to represent their own unique ethnic group.

hallways by the band, and strong student involvement, excitement was in the air the first week at Ridgemont.

For a special event, FFA chapter members coordinated and hosted a school-wide cook-out for the entire student body during the week of Welcome Back to Fast Times at Ridgemont High. The lunch was free to all students, thanks to the chapter’s ingenuity and strong partnerships with community businesses. Members solicited donations from

nine area groups, including donations from the Cattle Association, Ohio Lamb Association, and local grocery stores and restaurants. A well-developed booster club pitched in their efforts to serve the drinks and meals to students at the event.

The collaborative event turned out to be a huge success, with FFA members teaming with other student groups to help galvanize excitement for the new school year.



CHICAGO

WILLOW SPRINGS FFA

Going Green

► When rising fuel and energy prices started to hit home this year, the students of Willow Springs FFA weren't going to sit quietly and watch.

When the chapter realized that the costs were pinching the community—even their own families, they developed a quick plan of action. They showed great leadership in their own town by creating a PR campaign to educate and enable citizens

to make better choices on their household fuel consumption.

“Going Green” was the name of a publicity campaign. The students engaged members of the community in surveys, learning about individuals' specific energy usage and financial gaps. They then developed a web site and other communications with information on reducing energy consumption.

The campaign was a big success—and was even promoted during FFA Week activities, through a “Green Watch” section in the school newspaper. Chapter members

WILLOW SPRINGS



also distributed informational pamphlets during a school board presentation and starting a recycling program for the high school's used paper.

SIBLEY-OCHEYEDAN HS

Campaign for Agriculture

► As citizens of Iowa, which holds the first presidential caucus of the year, members of the Sibley-Ocheyedan FFA already have a front row seat to early presidential campaigns. This year, after meeting with Senators Tom Harkin and Charles Grassley, they decided to move beyond a spectator role and host an event with John Edwards, where he gave his first major policy statement on agriculture and education.

Months of intense planning made this event possible: phone calls to the presidential campaigns, community organizations, and media; meetings with school officials to prepare the auditorium and the press room; promotion of the event to high school students and their families.

Their hard work paid off. Over 550 people packed the auditorium of the local high school, making it the most heavily attended political event in the history of Osceola



SIBLEY-OCHEYEDAN

County. National and local media were there to cover Edwards' policy statement and his responses to audience questions, including the agriculture-related questions of several high school students.

Ultimately, Edwards' campaign did not succeed. Yet, his event in Sibley, Iowa remains a success for the community—particularly,

the high school students, who were energized to become a part of the political process.

The success of a completely different project provided the Sibley-Ocheyedan FFA another occasion to meet with their senators: the production of the “Discover Osceola County” tourism brochure. Members researched and visited museums and other points of interest. After writing all the content, they worked with lay-out artists at the local printing company to prepare the brochure for printing. Over 10,000 copies were distributed to the community and visitors' centers; members personally presented copies to Senators Harkin and Grassley.

The production of the brochure could not have come at better time. With high gas prices, many Americans are eschewing traditional vacation destinations in favor of places closer to home. “Discover Osceola County” brings attention to treasures right in the backyard of Iowans and those in surrounding states.



SIBLEY-OCHEYEDAN



WAUPACA

WAUPACA HIGH SCHOOL FFA

Fighting Hunger With Locally-grown Produce

► How do you turn a volunteer event for feeding the needy into a long-term solution to help support your community?

The Waupaca Chapter in Wisconsin is very dedicated to service, especially when it comes to solving the problem of hunger in their community. The chapter partners with a local charity called BreadBasket, coordinating special events to prepare nutritious, well-balanced meals based on the four food groups. By gathering the support and donations of local stores, the 75-student chapter committee for BreadBasket was successfully able to feed over 500 community residents two meals each, all while learning about nutritional needs, food safety, cooking procedures and Wisconsin Ag Ed standards. The committee also learned the ins and outs of coordinating a large-scale event and staying within project budgets.

But the Waupaca Chapter took their service to the next level, by getting creative about solutions for putting fresh produce

on the tables of hungry families. They came up with the idea to create a sustainable garden—capable of growing a large volume of produce to help support ongoing charitable efforts.

The first step was getting a land grant from the school district for 1.5 acres. Then they gathered thousands of dollars in donations from corporations, foundations, and area businesses for supplies like garden tools, a storage building, a rototiller, seeds and fertilizer. With the help of 350 volunteers recruited from the community, FFA members prepared the soil, planned, and planted the garden. The result was a harvest that yielded more than 3,000 pounds of produce, including onions, peppers, potatoes, sweet corn, and pumpkins. The food was then picked and delivered to local charities.

Because of the dedication of the Waupaca FFA, 312 families regularly receive the locally-grown fresh produce—which is picked and delivered within 24 hours of harvesting.

JEFF DAVIS CO. HS

Cultivating the Future

► FFA plays a vital role in the high school experience of its members. For every member of the Jefferson Davis High School Class of 2007, the FFA played a part in the culminating event of their high school experience: graduation.

Wearing official dress, members of the Jefferson Davis FFA of Hazlehurst, Georgia greeted graduation attendees, passed out programs, and helped attendees to their seats. Twenty-two Boston Ferns, cultivated by the chapter, were featured as decoration for the ceremony. Much like the students themselves, the fern's appearance at the graduation was the result of long-term care and hard work. In September, members planted 25 ferns. As part of a floriculture class, members watered and fertilized the ferns throughout the school year.

The ceremony not only represents a turning point in the lives of those graduating, but is also a major annual event for the entire community. The very visible presence of FFA at this event fosters much good will and highlights the key role of FFA in the school and the community.

JEFF DAVIS CO.





Simple Gifts: Working for the greater good

FORT WHITE MIDDLE SCHOOL TAKES
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP TO THE NEXT LEVEL





It's all in a day's service to wake up early on a dawning Saturday morning—and spend the weekend dredging through a local river to tackle the delicate water ecosystem of Northern Florida.

With 100 percent participation among its agriculture students, Fort White's middle school programing is an early training ground that gives students opportunities for leadership and core values, and places them in a tightly knit group, known in the community for organizing service projects that benefit both people and the environment.

Giving back begins early in Fort White. From water habitat cleanups to holiday food drives, the young but active group sets the standard for a model FFA chapter. The small Florida town actually boasts strong FFA groups, both at the middle and high school levels.

"Our town is very small, we have one stoplight. But we have full participation in FFA and we have a very strong chapter," says former Chapter President Clint Crenshaw, 14.

A dedication to the community is clearly expressed with the breadth of the chapter's projects. For example, the group practices servant citizenship through its Florida Outdoor Adventures program. Last year, all of its members participated in five workshops that focus on hiking, boating, hunting and archery under the mentorship of experienced professionals. The workshops helped the members to better serve their community by learning the proper safety techniques for these outdoor activities and to receive state certification and recognition.

Responsibility in the outdoors is a common theme for the chapter's activities.

They also worked last year to improve the community's river and creek health by conducting monthly testing for nitrates in an area river, while filing the reports with the local water management district for continuous monitoring. The chapter also assisted with the cleanup efforts by building a screen to prevent garbage from flowing downstream.

Fort White is in an ecologically crucial area of

Florida where waterways and natural resources intersect at an important geographic point, where small bodies of water flow together and make up the waterway system that feeds the state's water supply. The water travels through many high population cities and towns, eventually moving toward the ocean.

The chapter spent a weekend testing and filtering Rose Sink, a large creek near the middle school which feeds into an aquifer, not far from the school. With the creek in poor shape due to years of trash pollution, the chapter designed and built a filtration system that provides a catch net for trash and other debris, and provides a long-term solution for some of the pollution problems in the area. The filtering ensures that trash is not passed along to other bodies of water down the system in which Rose Sink flows.

"Rose Sink feeds into the Ichetucknee, which flows into the Santa Fe, which flows into the Swanee River, which in turn feeds into the Gulf of Mexico," explains Crenshaw.

Community giving and service is also a given for the well-developed Fort White Middle School group. A recent effort was to collect donations and assemble 75 personal toiletry bags for individuals in need. The bags, which contained items like soap, toothpaste and other personal hygiene items, were assembled as these things are often needed but not readily accessible. The bags were given to a local center for distribution. Other projects in past years have included similar themes, such as participation in local food drives and supporting the efforts of nonprofit organizations.

Crenshaw is convinced that joining FFA in middle school was key in developing confidence in his ability to make an impact in leadership and community service, as well as in developing skills as a comfortable public speaker. Almost all of the middle school chapter goes on to participate actively in the high school chapter.

"To anyone thinking about doing it, I'd say join. Do it now and don't wait until high school. FFA is the time of your life."

“Our town is very small, we have one stoplight. But we have full participation in FFA and we have a very strong chapter.”

BROOKSVILLE SR. FFA

Power of Cooperation

► The Brooksville Senior FFA of Florida had, in previous years, purchased their feeder pigs and show pigs together as a group. In the face of rising prices, they contacted 15 other FFA chapters and 4-H clubs in hopes of extending the financial success of their cooperative to others.

All programs could see the value of cooperative purchasing and agreed to participate, but it was the Brooksville Senior FFA that made that cooperative purchase happen. In this project they called “This Little Piggy Goes to Market Co-op,” they surveyed all chapters and clubs to determine their needs, obtained bids from feeder pig producers, evaluated all swine projects on the ethical treatment of their animals, and conducted workshops on all aspects of the swine program. Finally, on their way to the national FFA convention in Indianapolis, they selected the pigs for their co-op members—a demanding task considering the different show dates and thus different weight needs.

Through the power of cooperative purchasing, they saved each member over \$150, for a total savings of over \$10,000. Members of the cooperative conducted 65 swine projects, with animals exhibited in three different livestock shows. Given their success both financially and in the ring, the cooperative will likely continue to grow.



SHENANDOAH

SHENANDOAH HS FFA

Holiday Events Bring Joy to Community

► Bringing cheer to hundreds of individuals with physical and mental challenges required a significant team effort for members of the Shenandoah FFA Chapter in Middletown, Indiana. In support of 12 area group homes, FFA members coordinated three large holiday parties for the homes' residents.

With over 600 residents on the guest lists, the chapter committee decided to offer up the school's cafeteria, halls, and gym to accommodate the large holiday parties. Events for Easter, Halloween, and Christmas were planned for the year, and the chapter provided all the necessary planning for the parties. Students helped

provide everything from holiday-themed food and decorations, activity planning, to gifts for the residents to take home. A sound system and DJ were set up for each party and activities that met individuals' special needs were planned—such as bowling, a cake walk, wheelchair-accessible hay rides, and painting activities.

Party planning was not the only way Shenandoah FFA members spread holiday cheer. The chapter also coordinated Christmas donations for young children in need. Through successfully applying to an area foundation, seeking private donations, and holding a class challenge, more than \$3,000 in funds were collected for the community.



Taste of Agriculture Event Draws Homecoming Crowd

► Football and FFA might seem like a somewhat unusual combination, yet for members of the Platte Valley FFA Chapter in Kersey, Colorado—they saw the school’s homecoming event as a perfect time to organize a community-wide agricultural awareness event.

Planning for the Friday afternoon of their September homecoming, the chapter members created an event they called the “Taste of Agriculture.” The idea was simple, yet meaningful for the whole community—bring in area producers the day of homecoming, organize a wide variety of

food vendor booths, and make agricultural awareness a part of the afternoon/evening school-wide homecoming celebration.

The event was an ideal opportunity to raise chapter funds while promoting agricultural literacy—as well as educate the public on food systems and commodities. FFA members coordinated with 15 area producers and commodity groups, and set up the Taste of Agriculture outside the school’s stadium just prior to the annual homecoming football game. Marketed through local press releases, newsletters and papers, the event was open to the community as well as



PLATTE VALLEY

the wider school population - and students were encouraged to attend the educational event during the school day on Friday.

The Taste of Agriculture event was very successful. More than 450 people attended at a ticket price of \$5 each—which well-exceeded the chapter’s original goal of 300 for attendance.



ARKANSAS CITY



Community Supporters Make All the Difference

► Only through the support of the community does FFA achieve its mission of securing the future of agriculture. Through the Supporter of the Month program, the Arkansas City FFA of Kansas recognized the organizations and businesses that sponsor FFA activities, work with alumni, and provide financial support.

After much deliberation, the chapter selected the first group of organizations and

businesses to receive the award: Cowley County Extension, Union State Bank, Prairieland Partners, AC Police Department, and USD 470 BOE. Each organization received two months of recognition. FFA members presented each supporter with a certificate, baked goods, and a sign to help them display their support to the community. Photos of the event were sent to local media along with a press release detailing

the work supporters had done for the FFA.

All of this very public recognition of FFA supporters provided positive publicity for both the supporters and the FFA. Other community members were also encouraged to get involved with the organization. In addition, FFA members got hands-on experience in public relations. Most importantly, they simply said “thank you” to those who make the success of FFA possible.



Adapting to Global Change

STUDENTS IMMERSE IN GLOBAL AGRICULTURE STUDIES WITH UNIQUE BRAZILIAN EXCHANGE PROGRAM



Steeped in rich heritage and history, there is a uniqueness about Switzerland County, Indiana. One claim is that the area is home to one of the earliest efforts for winemaking in the U.S. Each year, the county celebrates over 200 years of local winemaking with the Swiss Wine Festival, complete with a traditional grape stomp.

Hundreds of years ago, wine was primarily a product of Europe. But changes in the European supply allowed for wine production to become important in the U.S.

With these types of things in mind, the FFA members of Switzerland County know that changes in local agriculture are often the result of being in the context of major global changes. So, history and global trends serve as a foundation for the school's agriculture curriculum and projects.

The “how” and “why” changes happen in agriculture is important to young leaders, especially as the world becomes more globally-focused and advances itself in technology. Changes in consumer preferences are shifting more quickly than ever.

“The only way to learn about global markets is to travel and see what others grow, produce, and sell, as well as experience local governments and see how they regulate agriculture,” says FFA advisor Greg Curlin, who regularly shares globally-focused presentations with his students, comparing different countries' agricultural systems. The photos and stories foster ideas that could help the U.S. in the future.

As part of their global focus, the members of the Switzerland County FFA Chapter decided to open up their curriculum and projects to include a long-term study of Brazilian culture and agriculture, with the highlight being an exchange program between chapter FFA members and agriculture students from Brazil.

Why study Brazil in particular? The chapter chose Brazil because of the uniqueness of terrain, resources, and the sophistication of agricultural markets found in the country. Brazil has a diverse climate and an economy that is largely agriculture-based, with major world exports such as coffee, sugarcane, cocoa and tropical fruits and nuts. With a diversity of funding for agricultural enterprises, the country has been able to be flexible enough to meet the changing preference of world consumers, and in recent years has become quick to change what crops and livestock are produced to meet those needs.

With that in mind, Brazil was the perfect learning ground for the Switzerland County students to bring

knowledge of technology and process back to the U.S. at both the local and state level. A well developed Plan of Action with good success measures helped ensure that the student exchange project naturally extended what students were already learning in the classroom – with their textbooks meeting some solid real-life experience.

As part of their year-long project, four FFA members applied to serve as host families for Brazilian students. To complete the exchange, one Switzerland County FFA member was chosen to travel to Brazil. Once students were accepted into the program, the entire chapter began preparing for the visits by learning about Brazilian culture—working through various topics about the everyday life of the country's farmers. The well-prepared FFA members were then able to maximize their experience, gaining a deeper understanding of international agriculture, economics, education, and specialty products of Brazil.

The one-week exchange program was tightly-coordinated with the local and state Farm Bureaus in order to come back and give presentations to local farmer groups. Bringing back and sharing their key learnings was important to the chapter, both at the state and national level – and much of the Switzerland County FFA curriculum is dedicated to topics that have a more national appeal.

“We need to be able to transition our traditional agricultural activities into the present day. This program fosters leadership that can be brought back to everyday practice. The exchange program brings to life the vision of what agriculture is like today,” says Curlin.

The learning experience included real-life comparison of both cultures. The exchange students traveled with a teacher, who led the Indiana FFA members through topics about Brazil. The Brazilian students in turn traveled through Indiana during the week-long exchange, learning about tobacco processing, grain selling, forestry and land reserves, production and processing of a local Switzerland County winery, honey processing, and fishing in local Indiana ponds and lakes.

As a result of its success, the exchange program has become a staple of the Switzerland County curriculum and FFA projects, with future travel for students in coming years already in the works. The program offers diversity to rural students – usually giving them their first experiences with travel abroad and first-hand knowledge of how other cultures experience and manage agriculture.

Brazil has a diverse climate and an economy that is largely agriculture-based, with major world exports such as coffee, sugarcane, cocoa and tropical fruits and nuts.

WOODLAND HS FFA

A Snapshot of Agricultural History

► How did early pioneers make their life on the expanding frontier?

Woodlan FFA Chapter in Woodburn, Indiana worked to study and simulate the life of early settlers of Allen County, Indiana. In turn, they used their knowledge to educate local elementary students on the early 1800's pioneer experience during "Wabash-Erie Agricultural History Field Days."

With the remains of the Wabash Erie Canal running parallel to the school, chapter members planned the educational field days in two parts—a fall session in October and a session in May for spring themes. Students dressed in period costumes and led first and second graders through eighteen interactive sessions.

The chapter members helped the younger children literally see, touch and taste 1800s agriculture with demonstrations on a wide variety of topics including a typical pioneer school house, candle making, apple cider making, medicine during the time period, cabin building, and home life and cooking in the 1800's.

The field days were capped off with an authentic pioneer meal that was researched and prepared by food sciences classes. Soup beans with ham, corn meal, biscuits, honey, and dried foods were served.

The successful project exceeded the chapter's original goals by including seven elementary school classes and almost 500 students, which was double the original planned participation.

PONTIAC HS

Troop or Treat

► Christmas is a time of year when many think of spreading good cheer to those in difficult situations. Pontiac FFA of Illinois recognized that soldiers stationed abroad miss the comforts of home at other times of year, too. With "Troop or Treat," members tried to share some of the fun of Halloween with soldiers stationed at bases in the United Arab Emirates.

Members approached a new social studies teacher who was also a veteran for assistance in identifying a soldier who would appreciate a gift of candy and other non-perishable treats. This teacher helped select two soldiers who rarely received care packages.

On Halloween, 10 members, happy for

an excuse to don costumes past the usual age limit for trick-or-treating, went out collecting candy for the troops. Everyone in the community got into the spirit of the event. Residents happily handed out extra candy to support the cause. When members approached the house of their chapter advisor, he appeared at the door in a full Darth Vader costume, ready to add to their bounty. The day after Halloween, a nursing home called to donate a leftover 30 pounds of candy. In all, more than 90 pounds of candy were sent to the troops overseas—along with the message that people at home appreciate and support them the whole year round.



PONTIAC



Want to know more
about the FFA?
Visit www.ffa.org



Eight Steps to Development.

AWARD WINNING FFA CHAPTERS DEVELOP A STRONG PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES WHICH EMERGES FROM A PROCESS AND STRUCTURE INVOLVING EVERY MEMBER IN SETTING CHAPTER GOALS. ONCE THE GOALS ARE SET, ACTIVITIES ARE PLANNED AND CARRIED OUT.

- 1** Organize standing, executive and special committees to address areas of student, chapter and community interest and development. Each member serves on at least one committee.
- 2** Each committee identifies goals and activities related to its purpose/area.
- 3** Committees present their selected activities, including estimated income and costs to the entire chapter.
- 4** Approved activities and a combined chapter calendar of events are published in a written POA and distributed to members.
- 5** Committees and sub-committees develop detailed plans for each activity.
- 6** Members implement the plans.
- 7** Committees report results and evaluate the activities. They prepare written final reports for each activity, noting costs, income, accomplishments and recommendations.
- 8** Chapter leaders refer to the POA and its results to prepare an application for the National Chapter Award Program.

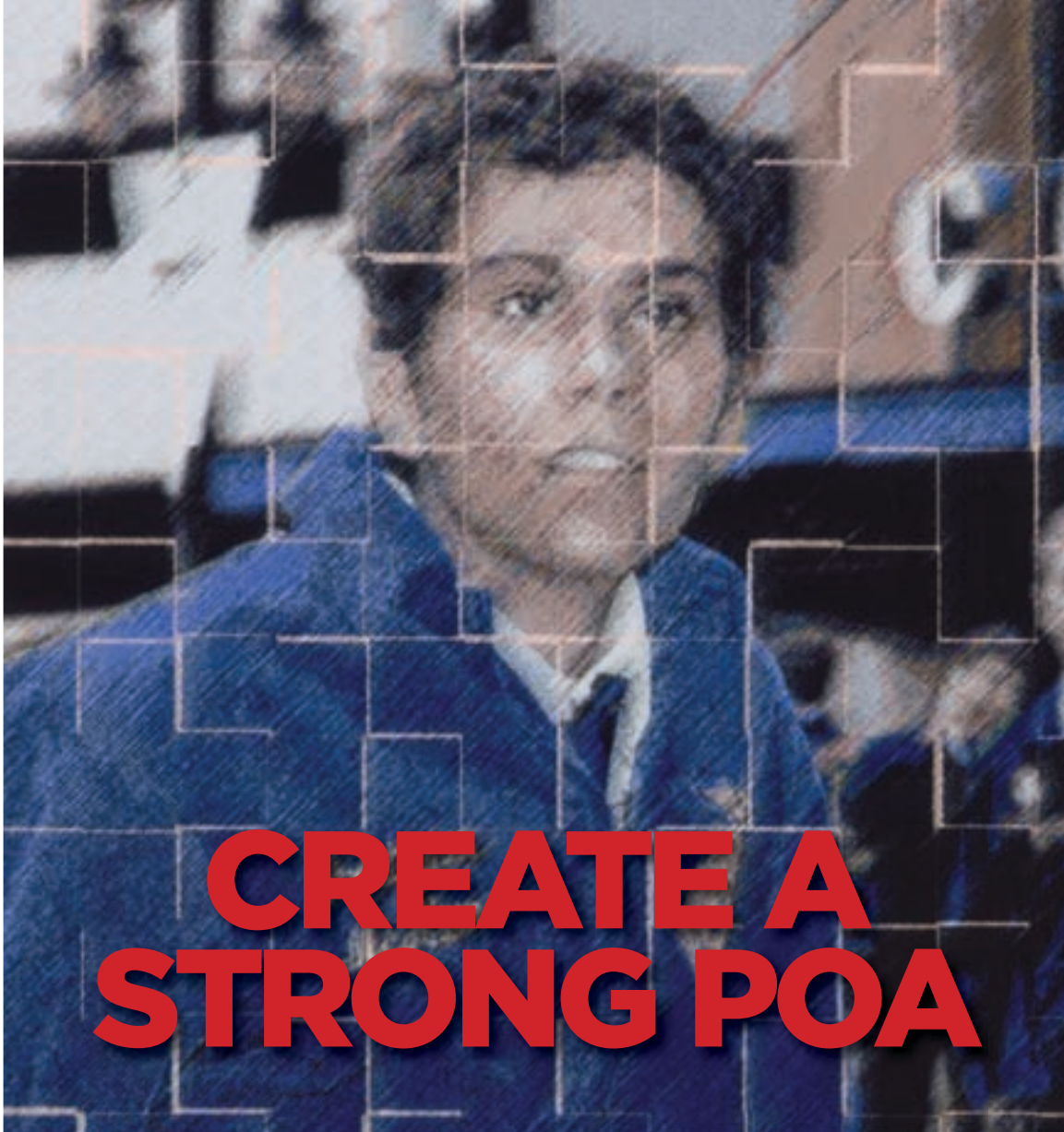




Realizing Success

National FFA staff, judges, advisors and others involved in the selection process say these recommendations are valuable in applying for national recognition and awards.

- 1** Follow the developmental process outlined in Chapter Planning and Recognition: A Student Handbook. Identify measurable and realistic goals. Develop an educational plan that meets the chapter's goals. Evaluate the results and member benefits. Include information on how the activity affected members, the chapter, the school and the community.
- 2** Include facts about the percentage of members and accomplishments.
- 3** Keep a file of activities and notes on areas for improvement within each activity. Students can use this information for POA planning.
- 4** Take note of ideas that spring to mind when completing the application. Jot down these ideas to use during the next POA planning session.
- 5** Use each activity only once on Form I. If used more than once, your chapter will not qualify for national Gold recognition. Every activity should have measurable objectives. The plan of action should be detailed and should reference each objective.
- 6** Ask an English teacher or someone you trust to edit your application. They'll learn more about FFA and you will submit a better application.
- 7** Don't attach information or materials not requested. Points may be deducted or an application may be disqualified for including supplementary materials not specifically requested in the application.
- 8** Review the application checklist. Follow the instructions carefully. Please use the FFA award application folder as pages may be lost.



Strong membership numbers and strong POAs go hand in hand.

FFA members like Chris Gilliland have gained friendships and skills through their chapter involvement. “I like everything about the FFA, especially meeting new people,” says Chris, a sophomore in the Sedan Chapter in Kansas. “I joined to become a better speaker because I freeze up on stage.”

Making a program vibrant will bring in more members like Chris. FFA chapters can serve as a powerful means of recruiting students into agricultural education programs. Here are some ways to keep members involved:

- Ensure each FFA chapter “belongs” to students. Let them plan and conduct its activities and receive recognition.
- Make students aware of opportunities available in FFA. Students seeking involvement in activities should look no further than this vibrant, dynamic organization.
- Make FFA an integral part of the agricultural education program. Provide all students with instruction in leadership

development. Because career development events are an application of lessons learned in class, all students should participate in them.

- Encourage timid students to become involved. Students are sometimes reluctant to participate in leadership activities. Once involved, however, many quickly develop skills and competencies and often continue their involvement.
- Ask every student to be involved in at least one FFA activity each grading period. Chart their involvement.
- Match experienced students with other students in mentoring relationships. Invite potential members to travel with members to FFA activities.
- Let potential students see firsthand the close relationship that develops between agriculture students and their teachers.
- Plan fun events such as in-school BBQs, parties and recreational activities for all students, and encourage them to attend.



Circle of Excellence

The quickest way to grow a top tier FFA chapter is recognizing that success relies on solid planning and skillful implementation. Developing a written Program of Activities (POA) helps establish goals that chapter members can work toward for an entire year.

Well-planned and well-executed POA's will aid students in developing the kind of planning and leadership skills that will serve them through a lifetime of career and personal success.

A well planned POA will:

- ◆ Ensure chapter activities meet member needs.
- ◆ Lead to an effective budget.
- ◆ Provide students with experience in planning.
- ◆ Serve as a reference point throughout the year.
- ◆ Provide direction from year to year.