

New VISIONS



The Official Newsletter of the National FFA Alumni Association

Volume 12, Issue 1 • March-April 2007

FFA Alumni Council Discusses, Acts Upon National Issues

The National FFA Alumni Council met during the recent National Ag Ed In-service in Indianapolis to discuss and act on several issues related to the affairs of the national association. Highlights follow:

- The Council executive committee appointed National FFA Alumni Executive Director J. Frank Saldaña to a three-year term as the association's first representative to the National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization (PAS) board of directors (visit www.nationalpas.org for more details on PAS).
- The Council executive committee approved the collection of nominations for a business/industry representative to the Alumni Council. Delegates at last year's convention approved a Bylaws amendment that established this position. Council members have asked the National FFA Foundation for names of potential candidates so they can appoint the representative by summer.
- Council members authorized the release of contact information for active FFA Alumni affiliates to a third-party liability insurance provider. Affiliate officials can expect to receive insurance promotional materials by summer.

- Council members received an update on a test pilot in Georgia of a Local Advocacy Program for Agricultural Education. Conducted in concert with NAAE, this program is designed to foster and mobilize grassroots advocacy for agricultural education and FFA.
- Council members also received an update on the transition of Alumni membership rosters to an Excel format for the new membership year. Affiliates will likely be given a choice of filing their rosters via paper or electronically for the 2007-2008 membership year.
- The Council received an update on an Online Agricultural Education Volunteer Leader Training Program for the 2007-2008 school year. The site would allow Alumni leaders to obtain recognition after having completed 10 training modules that cover a wide range of volunteer management topics. The modules are currently available online at www.ffa.org/alumni/html/alum_volunteerism.htm or via CD (contact the National Office for a copy).

Council members and national FFA Alumni staff would appreciate input on these issues. Members are asked to direct their questions, comments, and concerns to J. Frank Saldaña, National FFA Alumni Executive Director, at fsaldana@ffa.org or 317-802-4292.

Calendar 2007

Dates listed are when items must be postmarked to the National Office.

May 15

Rosters due to qualify for grants, awards, and delegate counts

Legion of Merit applications

June 1

State Leaders Conference registration

July 1

Local Program Support Grant applications

Outstanding/Pioneer Affiliate, Outstanding State Affiliate, Outstanding Achievement, and National Distinguished Contributor nomination applications; and Scrapbooks

National Alumni Council nominations

July 15

Auction donation forms for items to appear in catalog

July 10-15

State Leaders Conference, Portland, OR

October 24-27

Alumni Silent Auction, Indianapolis, IN

October 25-26

Alumni Convention, Indianapolis, IN

October 26

Alumni Live Auction, Indianapolis, IN

Please visit the FFA Alumni website at www.ffa.org/alumni/ to download updated award applications. Send requests for forms to bhaig@ffa.org or phone 317-802-4293 to have them mailed via the U.S. Postal Service.



Alumni in Action

Country music singer Aaron Tippin (left) performed for U.S. troops at a Thanksgiving concert in Salerno, Afghanistan, while proudly wearing an FFA hat. FFA Alumni life member and first lieutenant commander Christopher Kuzniaj (right), along with his platoon, provided security for Tippin's visit.

ROUND TABLE

Alumni's Golden Role in 10 x 15

The agricultural education community has a golden opportunity to shape its future, and Alumni members are in a position to capitalize on the resources to make it happen.



J. Frank Saldaña

Have you heard of the "10 x 15"? The main goal of this ambitious long-range strategy for agricultural education is to establish 10,000 quality agricultural science education programs that serve students through an integrated model of classroom/laboratory instruction, experiential learning, and leadership and personal skill development. Another goal includes persuading all enrolled students to become FFA members and implement a supervised agricultural experience program that supports classroom and laboratory instruction.

The focus of this unprecedented effort is twofold: 1) create new programs in communities not yet served by agricultural education and FFA, and 2) strengthen the quality of current programs providing personal, academic, and career education in agriculture. It is Team Ag Ed's aim to have these superior agricultural education programs in operation by the year 2015. Hence, the name "10 x 15."

Under the direction of The National Council for Agricultural Education, of which the National FFA Alumni Association is a member, eight high-priority strategies have been identified (visit http://www.ffa.org/alumni/documents/alum_aged_annual_report.pdf for more details). They represent a manageable body of work that can yield the greatest results in carrying agricultural education successfully into the future.

This is where you as **Alumni members and volunteers** enter the picture. On behalf of Team Ag Ed, I'm asking for your help with four imperative initiatives broadly described as follows:

Retention—Maintain the retention rate of current agricultural educators by offering collaboration and assistance. Secure support from businesses, industry associations, Alumni, educators, parents, and students to become contributing partners to local programs.

Advocacy—Develop local strategies that encourage supporters and volunteers to advocate effectively on behalf of agricultural education. Utilize materials, tools, and education that implement these advocacy strategies.

Mentoring—Mentor local agricultural education students to pursue a career as agricultural educators.

Scholarships—Devise and implement a community strategy for enlisting financial support from public, corporate, Alumni, and agricultural associations to ensure students continue their agricultural education.

Agricultural education programs need financial, volunteer, professional, and political resources to make agricultural education stronger and create a more integral presence for it in the communities and industries that it serves.

This is the reason for the existence of Alumni affiliates: to make a difference in your local communities. Let us turn this opportunity into more blue and gold throughout the nation!

J. Frank Saldaña
National FFA Alumni Executive Director
fsaldana@ffa.org



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FFA Alumni *New Visions* is prepared and published quarterly by the National FFA Alumni Association as an affiliate of the Future Farmers of America in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education as a service to state and local agricultural education agencies.

Vision

The vision of the National FFA Alumni Association is a world where people and communities grow and develop to their fullest potential.

Mission

The mission of the National FFA Alumni Association is to secure the promise of FFA and agricultural education by creating an environment where people and communities can develop their potential for **premier leadership, personal growth, and career success.**

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J. Frank Saldaña

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How to Become Involved

In future issues of the *New Visions*, National FFA Alumni Executive Director J. Frank Saldaña will provide specific information on how Alumni members can become involved in the 10 x 15 strategy.



National FFA Alumni Council (2006-2007)

Names, faces, and electronic contact information



Back Row (L-R)

Western Region Representative

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tdbbns@clemson.edu

Please contact Council members directly if you are interested in having them give a presentation or attend local and state FFA Alumni functions.

Not pictured:

Past National FFA Officer

Stuart Joy, NM
stu_joy@hotmail.com

Member Input Needed for Alumni Survey

In considering whether to fund Alumni programs, many sponsors ask for demographic information on our association's membership. The

National FFA Alumni Association is asking for your help in obtaining this information. In the near future, randomly selected Alumni members will receive an Alumni Member Survey package in the mail.



Please take a few moments to complete this short survey. Your responses are confidential and the information will be compiled only by National FFA Alumni staff. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

2007 Convention Update: Housing

The national FFA and Alumni conventions will soon be here. If you plan on attending, you are encouraged to act now to ensure that you have a hotel reservation in October!

How do you secure a hotel room if you are attending with your local FFA chapter? Alumni members who will be chaperoning or lodging with their local chapters are encouraged to contact their local advisors to obtain lodging.

How do you secure a hotel room if you are NOT attending with your local FFA chapter? Alumni members who will be attending the FFA and FFA Alumni conventions separately from an FFA chapter and need housing or have housing questions are asked to contact Ellen Williams at 317-802-4269 or ewilliams@ffa.org.

WANTED

Auction Donations for the 2007 FFA Alumni Benefit Auctions.

When: July 16, 2007 (commitments received by this date will be included in auction catalog)

Why: To raise funds for student scholarships

What:

- Donate items solicited from your local businesses.
- Donate items (crafts, hobbies, products) as an individual or as an Alumni affiliate.
- Donate outstanding student projects.
- Donate a basket representing FFA, FFA Alumni, and agriculture in your state, which will be entered in the State Basket Contest to win prizes.

Visit www.ffa.org/alumni/ to complete a donation form or contact us at asmyer@ffa.org or **317-802-4294** for more information. The benefit auctions will take place at the National FFA Alumni Convention held on October 24-26 in Indianapolis, IN.

Reward: Student scholarships!



“News You Can Use” is a column designed to keep Alumni members and volunteers informed of valuable and timely information.

Student Scholarships

National Honor Roll (NHR) was developed to recognize high school and middle school students who have attained outstanding academic success and to provide customized service as they apply to college. NHR is a sponsor of the FFA Collegiate Scholarship program. In addition, NHR has other scholarship opportunities available to FFA members. For details, contact Laura Passarella at **516-593-0555**, ext. 144, or at lpassarella@nationalhonorroll.org.

Washington Leadership Conference (WLC) Scholarships

Each year the National FFA Alumni Association raises funds at the silent and live benefit auctions held during the national FFA convention to help students attend the WLC. States and local Alumni affiliates receive scholarship

monies based on their FFA Alumni membership. Information packets and required documentation were mailed to designated state leaders in January. To learn about the specific rules that may apply, leaders are encouraged to visit www.ffa.org/alumni/ for further details. Because individual state associations determine how the scholarships are awarded, local leaders are asked to contact their state representatives to understand how students can apply for a National FFA Alumni WLC scholarship. Questions concerning National FFA Alumni WLC scholarships should be directed to alumni@ffa.org.

Convention Judges

The National FFA Organization is accepting nominations for judges for the Agricultural Proficiency Awards, Stars, Agriscience Awards,

and National Chapter Awards at the 2007 National FFA Convention in Indianapolis. The Agricultural Proficiency and Star Awards judging will take place on Thursday, October 25. All judges will be invited to an awards luncheon that day. The Agriscience Awards will be judged Wednesday, October 24 and Thursday, October 25. National Chapter Awards will be judged Wednesday, October 24. Judging is on a volunteer basis (no expenses for the judges will be covered). To download a nomination form, visit www.ffa.org/statestaff/documents/conv_judgenomform.pdf or contact Rosalie Hunsinger at the National FFA Organization at **317-802-4255** or proficiency@ffa.org. Forms can be faxed to Rosalie at **317-802-5255**.

State Leaders Conference to Honor Past, Celebrate Present

The National FFA Alumni Association invites all its members to attend the 2007 State Leaders Conference (SLC) July 10-15 in Portland, Ore. The conference theme is "Honor the Past; Celebrate the Present," and participants will explore ways to strengthen their affiliates through workshops, speakers, and group activities.

Conference Details, Costs

With their registration, participants will receive conference supplies, local transportation, five nights/six days of hotel stay (double occupancy), and the majority of their meals. The total cost of the conference is \$400 (a \$150 registration fee, plus a \$250 conference fee). Each state association may send one official representative, who will only pay the \$150 registration fee. The conference fee for the official state representative will be covered by a \$250 SLC grant awarded by the National FFA Alumni Association. There will be a \$50 fee for any cancellation received after June 29, 2007.

Additional Alumni members are welcome to attend (see article below for one member's sacrifice in order to attend this year's conference). **The \$150 registration fee and registration form must be postmarked no later than June 1 to the National FFA Alumni Association.** The balance due may be paid with the registration or during the conference check-in on July 10 in Portland. In addition, spouses and families are welcome to attend for a special fee, which includes lodging, tours, group meals, and social activities.

The conference will be held at the Monarch Hotel & Conference Center near Portland, Ore. Members interested in attending can visit the center's website at www.monarchhotel.cc to view hotel images and to obtain additional hotel information. Members are asked not to contact the hotel to make reservations, which will be arranged by the National FFA Alumni Association.

For details (including a tentative schedule and new registration guidelines) and registration forms, contact your state's Alumni leaders

or visit the FFA Alumni website at www.ffa.org/alumni/.

Sponsored by



Making Travel Arrangements

Participants are encouraged to make their travel arrangements in order to arrive in Portland between 3 p.m. (hotel check-in time) and 6 p.m. (if possible) on Tuesday, July 10 and depart by check-out time (Noon) on Sunday, July 15. A complimentary shuttle to and from the Portland International Airport will be provided by the Monarch Hotel & Conference Center. The 2007 SLC conference kickoff dinner and the opening session will begin at 7 p.m. on July 10.

Local Member Makes State Leaders Conference a Priority



Claudia Peña

Claudia Peña is the reporter for the Southside FFA Alumni affiliate in San Antonio, Texas, where her children are FFA members. She first attended the State Leaders Conference

(SLC) in 2006 due to a grant focused on increasing diversity in agricultural education. The grant was sponsored by Toyota as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. The conference profoundly changed her perspective of agricultural education, the FFA, and FFA Alumni, so much so that Claudia is paying her own expenses to attend this year's conference in Oregon. *New Visions* staff recently interviewed Claudia to learn how SLC transformed her into an avid supporter of FFA and an active Alumni member.

Q: What was your general impression of the 2006 SLC and its benefit(s) to you?

A: When we arrived, so many of the other par-

ticipants warmly welcomed us. It was almost overwhelming. The benefit that I received from the conference was the understanding that there is so much available to our students through the FFA. Seeing what other chapters and affiliates do, or are capable of doing, sparked within me a desire to create the same results for our students and school.

Q: How did your perspective change after attending last year's SLC?

A: I became slightly involved with the FFA when my daughter joined. I had no idea what FFA was or what my daughter could accomplish. Once I attended SLC, I finally understood the benefits of being involved with the FFA Alumni and our school's FFA chapter.

Q: How did the experience help you upon your return to Southside?

A: I returned with so much information! Parents, teachers, school administrators, and board members need to attend national FFA and FFA Alumni activities to understand how

important agricultural education and the FFA is for our communities. Attending SLC gave me the tools and courage to voice my support for agricultural education and FFA to school officials, community members, and fellow parents. I know we are making progress in our program. With the addition of an Alumni affiliate, the opportunities for students have expanded.

Q: What do you hope to achieve by attending the 2007 SLC?

A: I hope to return with information and new ideas, which I can share with my fellow parents and Alumni, so we can benefit our teacher, program, and, most of all, our students.

Q: What advice would you offer to Alumni members who want to attend SLC, but question its value?

A: The experience will return rewards beyond your expectations. The cost of the trip is a minor setback compared to all the benefits of SLC. I can honestly tell you it is a life changing experience.

Among Friends

Making a Positive Difference in the Life of a Challenged Student

Eric Nicholson is a senior at Morgan County High School in Madison, Ga. He has a special challenge: Downs Syndrome. Eric graduates from high school this year and has applied for admission this fall to The Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute, a residential community that would teach Eric independent living and basic job skills suited to his abilities.

New Visions staff recently interviewed his instructor Tim Savelle, who has taught at Morgan County for the last nine years, on how Eric has benefited from his involvement in agricultural education.

Q: How has agricultural education and FFA specifically helped Eric?

A: Our FFA program has had a profound positive impact on Eric. His Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) has helped him to overcome his fear of large animals. He can now easily handle an 800 pound heifer in the show ring. He has learned to use a set of clippers to clip his own heifers, which has helped build strength in his arms and improved hand-eye coordination. He has become dependable and skilled in the daily

feeding and training of his show heifers. At livestock shows, he serves as an inspiration to all students because he works hard to help maintain the cleanliness in our county's barn space. He has developed into a confident exhibitor in the show ring. Eric participates in all chapter fundraisers and has learned to approach people with confidence to sell them fruit, barbecue tickets, and other items. Eric also has become much more outgoing. He is an enthusiastic participant in most activities at our chapter FFA meetings, where he enjoys the respect and admiration of the other members for stepping forward and being a contributing team member. His disability prevents him from participating in career development events, but he does an outstanding job at those things he is able to do.

Q: What honors has Eric attained through his involvement?

- Greenhand Degree
- Grand champion forestry minibooth exhibit at the Georgia National Fair
- Star Chapter FFA Degree recipient
- Outstanding herdsman award for excellence at state dairy show
- Diversified agricultural production proficiency award—4th place region
- State FFA Degree this April at the Georgia FFA Convention

Q: Can you describe how Alumni supported programs or activities have made a difference in Eric's life?

A: Our FFA Alumni affiliate sponsors or helps to sponsor many of the FFA activities in which Eric is involved, providing an indirect benefit to him. These include the commercial dairy heifer program, archery tournament, annual pork barbecue fundraiser, and chapter banquet. Through the barbecue, Alumni members interact directly with Eric. He has sold tickets and assisted at the barbecue. Probably the best example, though, is the dairy program. Not only do Alumni members help sponsor the program through contributions, but a number of them provide direct assistance to students. Eric has benefited in so many ways for years from Alumni members' help with clipping and fitting heifers; hauling heifers to the shows; and providing instruction, help, and encouragement in showmanship. The direct interaction of Alumni members with Eric and the relationships they have established with him has been tremendously beneficial in helping him to do the best he can within the constraints of his mental and physical challenges.

Q: How beneficial is FFA and agricultural education to students with various mental or physical challenges?

A: Agricultural education and FFA make a huge positive difference in the lives of students with special challenges. Students like Eric are unable to participate in most school activities like athletics, band, and chorus. FFA, however, has so many diverse opportunities that are tailor-made to



Support Network. Carol Williams (at left) and Eric Nicholson pose during a local dairy exhibitor training clinic at the Morgan County agricultural center. Carol and her husband Everett (not pictured) are both FFA Alumni life members, own a local dairy, and have worked with Eric and other Morgan County FFA members in the dairy project program for years.



Ideas Unlimited

"Ideas Unlimited" is a column designed to provide Alumni members and volunteers with useful ideas, tips, advice to help them build strong Alumni affiliates that support agricultural education programs and FFA chapters.

Oregon: "Web Blog"

A former FFA state officer established a web blog for the Oregon FFA Alumni Association. This forum provides state leaders a cost effective means of communicating with other affiliates across the state. State leaders can upload their state newsletters onto the site, which also permits local leaders to post news items from their affiliates and FFA chapters. The blog also features a secure chat room where state Alumni officers can communicate with each other and a public one with a bulletin board that is open to all Alumni members. The state FFA Alumni reporter and the communications committee chairperson can post pictures on the site. The state web blog also contains links to other state Team Ag Ed and the National FFA Organization websites.

Contact: Cindy Ettestad, 503-829-2530 or cettestad@yahoo.com.

Mississippi: "Patriotic Awards"

As a gesture of appreciation, the Mississippi FFA Alumni Association salutes agricultural educators and instructors who have been activated for overseas military service (in Iraq or elsewhere) by presenting each of them with a lifetime membership in the FFA Alumni association.

Contact: Monte Ladner, 601-267-8442 or mladner@leakesd.k12.ms.us.

Minnesota: "Hall of Fame"

To celebrate FFA's 75th anniversary in 2004, Minnesota leaders established a hall of fame and inducted 75 people its first year. The hall of fame recognizes individuals who have been influential and supportive of Minnesota FFA and demonstrated a high level of service and commitment to agriculture/agribusiness and agricultural education. FFA leaders oversee the program and plan

to induct two to five individuals into the hall of fame annually. A selection committee consisting of a variety of FFA members, Alumni, and agricultural educators make the final decision on who is inducted. An induction ceremony takes place at the annual state FFA convention. The intent of the hall of fame is to help past members reconnect and to generate publicity for agricultural education and FFA within the state.

Contact: Steve Olson, 763-682-2171 or steve@minnesotaturkey.com.



Continued from page 6

fit students with disabilities. The FFA also has a support system through local Alumni affiliates that give these students opportunities to interact and develop relationships with adult mentors and friends. The positive reinforcement that results from these relationships is tremendously beneficial to these students who often struggle with the simplest of tasks. The classroom component of agricultural education, which includes extensive hands-on instruction, permits these students to develop skills commensurate with their abilities.

Q: What advice would you give to other teachers and Alumni who interact with students with mental or physical challenges?

A: I encourage them to search for classroom and FFA activities that are suitable for them, to give them plenty of extra help so that they can experience success, provide them access to adult mentors through FFA Alumni, and shower them with recognition for their accomplishments. One of the most effective ways I have found to do this is to make an extra effort to publicize their names and pictures in the local newspaper as often as possible. Students

with handicaps are rarely recognized in the local media. I have found that doing this builds their self-confidence, results in supportive parents, and establishes wonderful working relationships with the special services faculty members who work daily with these students.

Q: How have you and Morgan County Alumni members benefited from your involvement with Eric?

A: Eric has been a tremendous inspiration to me, and I believe he has also inspired our Alumni members. Just watching a young man with so many challenges struggle to perform the simplest tasks motivates me to work harder to help other students. Many Alumni members have found a special friend in Eric, and this interaction has helped intensify their resolve to do everything they can to support FFA members and the FFA organization. I am proud to have had the opportunity to teach and advise Eric, and count it among the most memorable experiences of my career.

For more information on the Morgan County program, contact Tim Savelle at tim.savelle@morgan.k12.ga.us.

Eric's Involvement

When Eric Nicholson first entered high school, his parents, Nick and Hazel Nicholson, met with Morgan County agriculture instructor Tim Savelle to discuss how agricultural education and FFA could benefit him like it had his older brother Daniel, who was also Savelle's student.

Eric has been an FFA member for four years and has maintained a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) raising and showing heifers in the commercial dairy heifer program. For the last four years, he has exhibited dairy heifers in six shows per year and earned blue ribbons in several shows.

With the help of his mother and a fellow FFA member, Eric constructed a forestry booth exhibit for the Georgia National Fair. His exhibit was named Grand Champion.

With the help of his father, he planted and tended a large vegetable garden and sold its produce to friends and neighbors.

The garden and the dairy heifer SAE projects made it possible for him to submit a proficiency award application in the area of diversified agricultural production. He particularly likes greenhouse and landscape work. Eric has participated in all chapter fundraisers and in most leadership/team building activities at FFA meetings.

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Newsletter

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