NEW HORIZONS®

Spring/Summer 2021

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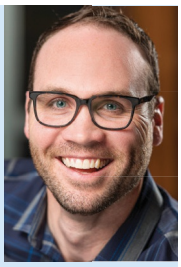
Have Your Best FFA WEEK YET!

OUR GUIDE TO PLANNING AND CELEBRATING IN 2021



IT'S NATIONAL FFA Week!

National FFA Week is nearly upon us – a time set aside each year for FFA members across the country to take part in agricultural, leadership and service-based activities, and to share the message of FFA.

We're doing our part for you. In "2021 Guide to National FFA Week," on page 16, you'll find a variety of National FFA Week-related how-tos, statistics, success stories, virtual activities and more to help you make the most of it.

"National FFA Week is a significant event that really showcases the heart of our organization," says Christine White, chief program officer for the National FFA Organization. "Local chapters use this as an opportunity to highlight program success, recognize community supporters and amplify the mission of the organization."

This year, more than 700,000 FFA members will spend the week of Feb. 20-27 developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. They will do so in creative, innovative and even virtual ways.

"It could be hosting a breakfast for teachers, an open house for FFA supporters or bestowing chapter-level degrees. It truly is an opportunity to celebrate all things FFA. As a former member and agriculture educator, FFA Week is something I always looked forward to since it was a way to share my passion for the organization," White says. "FFA members should embrace the planning, execution and celebration that occurs with developing activities and events for FFA Week. The skills of teamwork, communication and advocating are ones you will carry with you beyond your FFA experience."

Keep track of all that is happening this week by following #FFAWeek on your social channels. Find more about all the resources available at **FFA.org/National-FFA-Week.**

In this issue, you'll also find articles about National Ag Day (observed on March 23), Black innovators in agriculture, a groundbreaking Kentucky equine program for students, and more.

Enjoy and have a super spring!

Justin Davey

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THE FFA VISION
FFA is growing the next generation of leaders who will change the world.

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

THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MISSION
Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resource systems.

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

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The National FFA Organization is a resource and support organization that does not select, control or supervise state association, local chapter or individual member activities. Educational materials are developed by FFA in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education as a service to state and local agricultural education agencies.

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FFA.org News

Find inspiring and informative articles, photo slideshows, videos and more about all aspects of FFA, and flip through an archive of past issues of *FFA New Horizons* magazine. ***FFA.org/News***

Student Toolbox

The toolbox on the Student Members dashboard is your place to find links and resources to manage your FFA experience. You can update your FFA profile, link to scholarship and grant opportunities, and find even more ways to make the most of your FFA membership. ***FFA.org/My-Toolbox/Student***

FFA Resume Generator

The FFA Resume Generator is a tool any member (student or alumni) can use to jump-start creating a great resume. You'll be asked questions about your education, work experience and FFA participation. After completing the form, the generator will export your resume in various formats, including a PDF or Microsoft Word document that is ready for immediate use. ***resumegenerator.ffa.org***

National FFA Week

Each year, FFA chapters around the country celebrate National FFA Week. It's a time to share what FFA is and the impact it has on members every day. See what's in store for FFA Week 2021 and find ways you can participate. ***FFA.org/National-FFA-Week***

FFA Video Center

From FFA history to supervised agricultural experience (SAE) ideas and inspiration to #SpeakAg Dialogues and more, this video collection is designed to engage students and the public in dialogue around important issues in agriculture. ***FFA.org/FFA-Video-Center***

Go for an FFA Grant

Maximize your impact as both an FFA member and chapter by applying for financial assistance. – By Jessica Walker Boehm

If a lack of funding keeps you or your chapter from taking on projects that would improve yourself or your community, consider applying for an FFA grant. Chances are there's an option that'll work for you. Here are nine opportunities to consider.

FFA GRANT PROGRAMS

Living to Serve Service-Learning Grant

Apply for a Living to Serve Service-Learning Grant if your project addresses a need related to community safety; hunger, health and nutrition; environmental responsibility; or community engagement. Middle and high school chapters can receive a yearlong grant of as much as $3,000 or a semester-long grant totaling up to $1,200.

Living to Serve Day of Service Mini-Grant

Looking to do a one-time service event? A Day of Service Mini-Grant can help make it possible. Alumni, middle and high school FFA chapters can receive as much as $400. Apply to support your National FFA Week service event.

Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) Grant

If you're an FFA member in grades 7-12 and need financial assistance to start or expand an SAE project, you can apply for a $1,000 SAE Grant.

CORPORATE GRANT PROGRAMS

AGCO Dealership Grants

AGCO dealers provide support to chapters in their local communities through $800 chapter grants, which they commit to in the fall and are awarded during National FFA Week each February.

Blue Jacket Grants

Syngenta crop protection retailers provide an FFA Blue Jacket grant and a $1,000 chapter grant to local FFA chapters. These commitments begin in the spring and are awarded in the fall.

Give Back to Your Roots Grant

Alumni and supporters can apply for a Give Back to Your Roots Grant if your chapter needs help covering affiliation fees or if your school's agricultural education program needs supplies and materials. Supported by Nutrien Ag Solutions, these grants total as much as $5,000.

Grants for Growing

Sponsored by Tractor Supply Company, the Grants for Growing program is for middle and high school chapters creating and improving project-based or experiential learning opportunities. Qualifying chapters can apply for up to $5,000.

Grow More Experience Sites

Syngenta Grow More Experience Sites provide $200 chapter grants to local FFA chapters that visit Grow More Sites to learn about effective agriculture production solutions.

Rising Sun Grants

Syngenta seed retailers provide $500 chapter grants to local FFA chapters. These commitments begin in the spring and are awarded in the fall.

Legacy Grants

Tractor Supply Company sponsors $500 grants to start and improve alumni and supporter chapters, and $1,000 to partner adults and students on projects and events.



Learn more about FFA grants, including application processes and deadline information, at ***FFA.org/Participate/Grants-And-Scholarships*** and ***FFA.org/AlumniGrants.***

Photography: Getty Images, Viorika



Kit Guides Fight on Global Hunger

New SAE prepares members to battle hunger in their communities and beyond.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

A new supervised agricultural experience (SAE) opportunity focusing on combating worldwide hunger helps FFA members put the last line of the organization's motto, "Living to Serve," into action.

Known as the International Agricultural Development, this type of project was created through a collaboration between the National Association of Supervisors of Agricultural Education (NASAE) and Growing Hope Globally, a nonprofit connecting rural U.S. communities with smallholder farmers in developing countries.

The International Agricultural Development SAE is also part of the SAE for All program that aims to ensure all members take part in an SAE through both foundational and immersion projects. As a result, members have access to an SAE for All career kit, "A Guide to International Agricultural Development." It outlines the project by defining international agricultural development, listing possible careers in the sector and the core skills required to obtain those careers, and providing student activity resources.

Although the kit includes project ideas and examples, members are encouraged to create their own immersion experiences that help meet a need in their community.

"Hunger is an issue everywhere, both in the U.S. and abroad, and by exploring an SAE in this area and learning more about the career opportunities in international agricultural development, we hope FFA members will see how they can make a difference," says Austin Large, NASAE regional vice president and executive director of the Texas FFA Association.

Star SAEs

American Star Award winners share their insight on how to create and sustain megawatt SAEs.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

Given to only four FFA members annually, one in each of four categories, an American Star Award is the most prestigious award a member can receive.

American Star Award winners have several things in common, including exceptional involvement in both their chapters and communities, but it's their impressive supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs) that set them apart from their peers.

The 2020 American Star Award winners share their tips for developing and maintaining a successful SAE.



"Finding something you like to do is important, but you're even more likely to be successful with an SAE if you can identify what you're passionate about."
– Cole Ketterling
2020 American Star Farmer



"Ask yourself if your project is meeting a need in your community and if it's something people might be willing to pay for. If the answer is yes, you have a financial incentive to stick with your SAE; that can be very powerful."
– Blake Kirchoff
2020 American Star in Agribusiness



"No matter which SAE you choose, you'll only get as much out of it as you put in, so it's important to have a strong work ethic and stay dedicated."
– Will Shelby
2020 American Star in Agricultural Placement

Stevens has completed 22 agriscience research projects to date!



"Get out of your comfort zone with your SAE, and don't be afraid to dig into something you've never tried before."
– Nicole Stevens
2020 American Star in Agriscience

Start Your SAE
Need a little support or inspiration? Find idea cards, videos, grant info and more at SAEForAll.org.

Photography: Getty Images, kuarmungadd, Courtesy © FFA

COME TO ORDER

- By Bev Flatt

I now declare this interview duly open for the transaction of questions or attention to any matter that Dr. Daniel Foster, registered parliamentarian, may properly present.

When it comes to leadership development events, parliamentary procedure is among the most popular. But how often are these skills used outside the chapter meeting room or competition space? Dr. Daniel Foster, one of several professional parliamentarians who serve as superintendents and members of National FFA's Conduct of Chapter Meeting and Parliamentary Procedure Leadership Development committees, shares his experiences with FFA members across the country.



"Engage with your professional organization early. For any profession, there are groups of individuals who care about advancing the standards and ideals of that profession. Seek those out."

- Dr. Daniel Foster

Q: What inspired you to become a professionally registered parliamentarian (PRP)?

A: If you are going to do something, do it 100%. I was looking for a way to document and convey my parliamentary knowledge to potential clients and stakeholders. Earning an industry credential allowed me to show creditability as well as create a talking point as we come together.

Q: What are some of the most misunderstood topics related to parliamentary procedure that you see?

A: There are several, but two are top of mind: quorum and ex officio. Quorum is the number of members required to legally transact business. It is codified in the bylaws of the organization. Most people mistakenly assume that it has to be a majority, which is not true. It is what is indicated in the bylaws. *Ex officio* means by virtue of title. For example, some organizations will make the president an ex officio member of all committees. The mistake is that people believe that ex officio members do not have a vote, which is not true.

Q: What advice would you give to FFA members looking to pursue a career in this field?

A: Engage with your professional organization early. For any profession, there are groups of individuals who care about advancing the standards and ideals of that profession. Seek those out. You already know the power of belonging to an organization through your membership in the National FFA Organization. Don't assume your personal journey of development and growth ends when your FFA membership is over. For parliamentary procedure, there are two organizations: the American Institute of Parliamentarians (AIP) and the National Association of Parliamentarians (NAP). By the way, if you compete in the National FFA Parliamentary Procedure Leadership Development Event, AIP will provide you membership in the organization until the age of 30.

See the BIG Picture

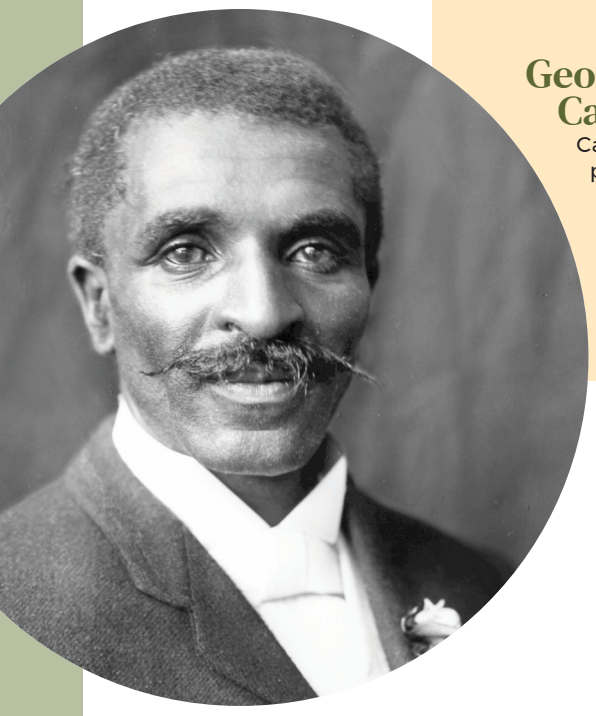
Participation in events like Parliamentary Procedure and Conduct of Chapter Meetings is about more than the direct link to the field of study. These skills will transfer to other fields you pursue, including preparing for careers and other professional roles. And you're sure to develop numerous soft skills about presenting yourself professionally, communicating effectively and working as a team to achieve a common goal.

Photography: Courtesy Daniel Foster, Copyright © FFA

Black Historymakers In Agriculture

In honor of Black History Month, we celebrate five innovators who changed the way we farm. - By Jodi Helmer

Henry Blair: Blair was an American inventor who designed and patented corn and cotton planters. The corn planter had a seed attachment and rakes so farmers could sow seeds and cover them in one movement; the horse-drawn cotton planter divided the soil and dropped seeds into the rows, boosting efficiencies.



George Washington Carver: Carver was a soil scientist who pioneered crop rotation. He recognized that cotton depleted nitrogen in the soil, so he began alternating cotton crops with peanuts and other nitrogen-fixing legumes.

Karen Washington: As the owner of Rise & Root Farm and cofounder of Black Urban Growers, Washington has championed urban farming as a means of providing access to fresh, local foods; this has promoted a resurgence in urban farming.

Booker T. Whatley: Whatley encouraged farmers to create clientele membership clubs, selling memberships in exchange for fresh produce to provide steady cash flow. The model, now known as community-supported agriculture, or CSA, changed the way farmers sell produce.



Frederick McKinley Jones: After Jones patented a refrigeration system in 1940, farmers could ship proteins and produce long distances, opening their access to markets and promoting worldwide food trade.

Photography: Getty Images, Bettmann, Universal History Archive/Contributor

FFA Trivia Stumpers

– By Jessica Mozo

FFA trivia competitions are a unique way for members to learn about the organization and the milestones we have marked in diversifying and expanding our membership. While these competitions are not national events, many states and local chapters hold Quiz Bowl competitions to test FFA knowledge. There was even a National FFA Trivia Challenge at the 93rd National FFA Convention & Expo! Test *your* knowledge with these common stumpers.

1. **In which year was Julie Smiley the first female elected to a national FFA office?**
   A. 1974
   B. 1976
   C. 1978
   D. Julie Smiley was not the first female elected to a national FFA office.

2. **What is the street address for the National FFA Center & Headquarters in Indianapolis?**
   A. 6060 FFA Boulevard
   B. 6060 FFA Court
   C. 6060 FFA Drive
   D. 6060 FFA Street

3. **What is the phone number for the FFA headquarters in Indianapolis?**
   A. 317-332-2668
   B. 463-332-2668
   C. 800-332-2668
   D. 888-332-2668

4. **Which FFA officer is seated to the president's left?**
   A. Vice president
   B. Treasurer
   C. Secretary
   D. Sentinel

5. **Who is the only U.S. president to have been an FFA member?**
   A. Richard Nixon
   B. Jimmy Carter
   C. George W. Bush
   D. Franklin D. Roosevelt

6. **In which year was the official blue corduroy FFA jacket introduced?**
   A. 1928
   B. 1933
   C. 1950
   D. 1948

Answers: 1: B; 2: C; 3: D; 4: C; 5: B; 6: B

Photography: Getty Images, EyeEm, RalphBaleno

6 Tips to Plan a Perfect FFA Banquet

Prioritize your planning and make your banquet a memorable event at the end of the school year. – By Bev Flatt

1. **Organize your event, your time and your workspace.**
   Proper planning prevents poor performance. Be sure you set timelines, budgets and team responsibilities as early as possible and follow up often.

2. **Prepare a backup plan.**
   Whether it's a change in the weather, broken technology or a missing tie, things will go wrong. Write a contingency plan and brief your team, so you are all ready for the unexpected.

3. **Make a list of "five-minute tasks."**
   Need to print name tags, wash vases for centerpieces or write a thank-you note? Add it to the "five-minute tasks" list so you can get little things done whenever you have a free moment.

4. **Develop mad flip-chart skills.**
   Create a minute-by-minute chart for event-day logistics. Everything from vendor arrival to post-event cleanup should be included to reduce stress and last-minute changes.

5. **Ask for feedback.**
   When is the next time you will have all your stakeholders in one room? Don't miss this opportunity to ask for feedback to make your next event even better.

6. **Keep on planning.**
   If planning your banquet was fun, work with your officer team to try planning other activities for your chapter and include them in your chapter's Program of Activities.



Visit **ShopFFA.org** for your banquet needs and **FFA.org** for tips on how to host a virtual banquet.



8 Ways to Celebrate National Ag Day

Mark your calendars for March 23. – By Lauren Denton

For 48 years, National Ag Day has provided a perfect opportunity to showcase the importance of agriculture. Celebrate the occasion and educate your community with one of these ideas, including two virtual options.



1. Plan a ticketed farm-to-table dinner as a fundraiser for your chapter.

2. Host a virtual career fair with community businesses that don't have an agricultral focus. This allows companies to learn about the skills and work ethic of FFA members.

3. Host a farm carnival. Have a petting zoo, tractors to climb and a maze made from hay bales.

4. Organize an event for local farmers, like a breakfast or chili cook-off. Consider including an awards ceremony to recognize their contributions to the community and agriculture as a whole.

5. Display an "agriculture fair" in the school cafeteria or common area with posters and simulations of important agricultural concepts.

6. Coordinate with a local elementary school to teach an agriculture lesson. Plant seeds in cups, draw the life cycle of a butterfly or make butter in a jar using locally sourced cream. Need to interact virtually? Join the class via webconference or record a short educational video for the teacher to show.



7. Take over the school newspaper for a special agriculture edition. (If your school doesn't have one, create one for Ag Day.) Feature local farmers, students' supervised agricultural experiences, quizzes, interesting facts, upcoming FFA events, and what it's like to be an FFA member.

8. Advocate for agriculture to your elected officials. Arrange a webconference with a local government leader or school board member.

For more resources, visit **AgDay.org.**

Photography: Getty Images, ThomasVogel, mediaphotos, Tara Moore

NATIONAL FFA OFFICER

Question & Answer

FFA members develop their own unique talents and explore their interests in a broad range of agricultural career pathways. What are your career aspirations, and how has FFA helped you develop those interests?



Doster Harper

NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT

After serving in the U.S. Army, my goal is to become a precision agriculture consultant for farmers. For my supervised agricultural experience (SAE), I tested the effects of treatment methods for an issue facing honeybee colonies called colony collapse disorder. This project took my interest in science and developed it into a passion for agriscience research. Using my SAE to compete for FFA proficiency awards inspired me to build a career helping farmers through agriscience research.



Anna Mathis

NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY

My career aspiration is to share the stories of agriculturists and advocate for our industry through agricultural communications and leadership. I'm interested in policy and international agriculture, and also the farming and ranching lifestyle. I participated in the agricultural communications career development event, but I fell in love with it when I toured farms and advocated on a community and national level. FFA has given me the passion and insight to be a strong advocate for agriculture.



Artha Jonassaint

SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I hope to pursue a career in which I contribute to more equitable agricultural, food and health systems through public policy initiatives. Through FFA programs like the State Officer Leadership Continuum, I've learned just how inter-sectoral our food system is. Effective solutions to our most pressing issues require a lot of collaboration and strategic thinking, and my time in FFA has helped me build the skills to do just that.



Paxton Dahmer

CENTRAL REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I'd like to work in outreach and education within the agriculture industry. I'm at my best when I am sharing about agriculture, and I'm excited to spend my life in this role. I am a product of agricultural education, and I'm beyond thankful for the skills and knowledge that I've developed through FFA. As a result of my membership, I'm more confident in my speaking ability and feel prepared to spark conversations about our industry.



Miriam Hoffman

EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

One of my core values is innovation, so my career aim is to work with innovators in regenerative agriculture, whether they're farmers, businesspeople or nonprofits. My time in FFA, through my dairy cattle SAE and meeting members from different backgrounds, has shown me that innovation is about new ideas coming together. We need a variety of perspectives to help empower both farmers and consumers to make healthy and beneficial decisions about food.



David Lopez

WESTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I've felt a stirring in my heart for years to be a difference-maker. Thanks to my time in agricultural education, I have learned how I can do that when my time in the blue jacket ends. Following my undergraduate education, I plan to apply to law school and earn my law degree. My hope is to help improve the quality of life for all people involved in our food production systems.

Photography: Copyright © FFA

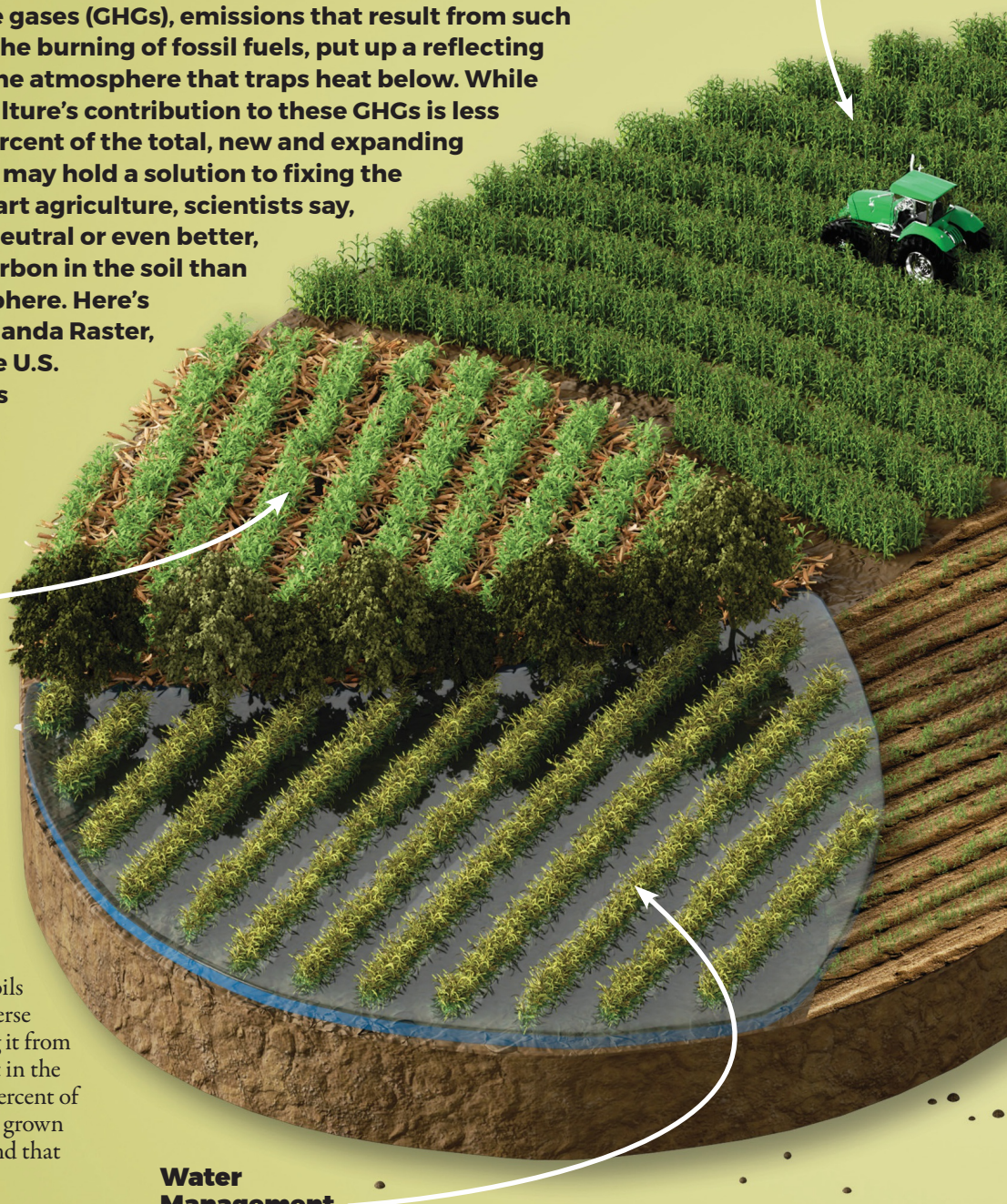
AG 101

Carbon-Neutral Agriculture

Greenhouse gases (GHGs), emissions that result from such things as the burning of fossil fuels, put up a reflecting shield in the atmosphere that traps heat below. While U.S. agriculture's contribution to these GHGs is less than 10 percent of the total, new and expanding farming technologies may hold a solution to fixing the problem. Climate-smart agriculture, scientists say, can become carbon-neutral or even better, sequestering more carbon in the soil than it emits to the atmosphere. Here's how, according to Amanda Raster, science director at the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action. •

By Gene Johnston

Illustration by Graham Hutchings



Conservation Tillage

Carbon, the primary GHG element, is also sequestered in soil in the form of plant residue, decomposing plant and animal matter, humus and microorganisms. "Soil tillage has the effect of bringing that stored carbon to the surface where it turns into carbon dioxide [CO_2] and escapes into the atmosphere," Raster says. Less-disturbed soils from conservation tillage reverse that carbon transfer, drawing it from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil. An estimated 60 to 70 percent of corn, soybeans and wheat are grown under conservation tillage, and that percentage is increasing. •

Water Management

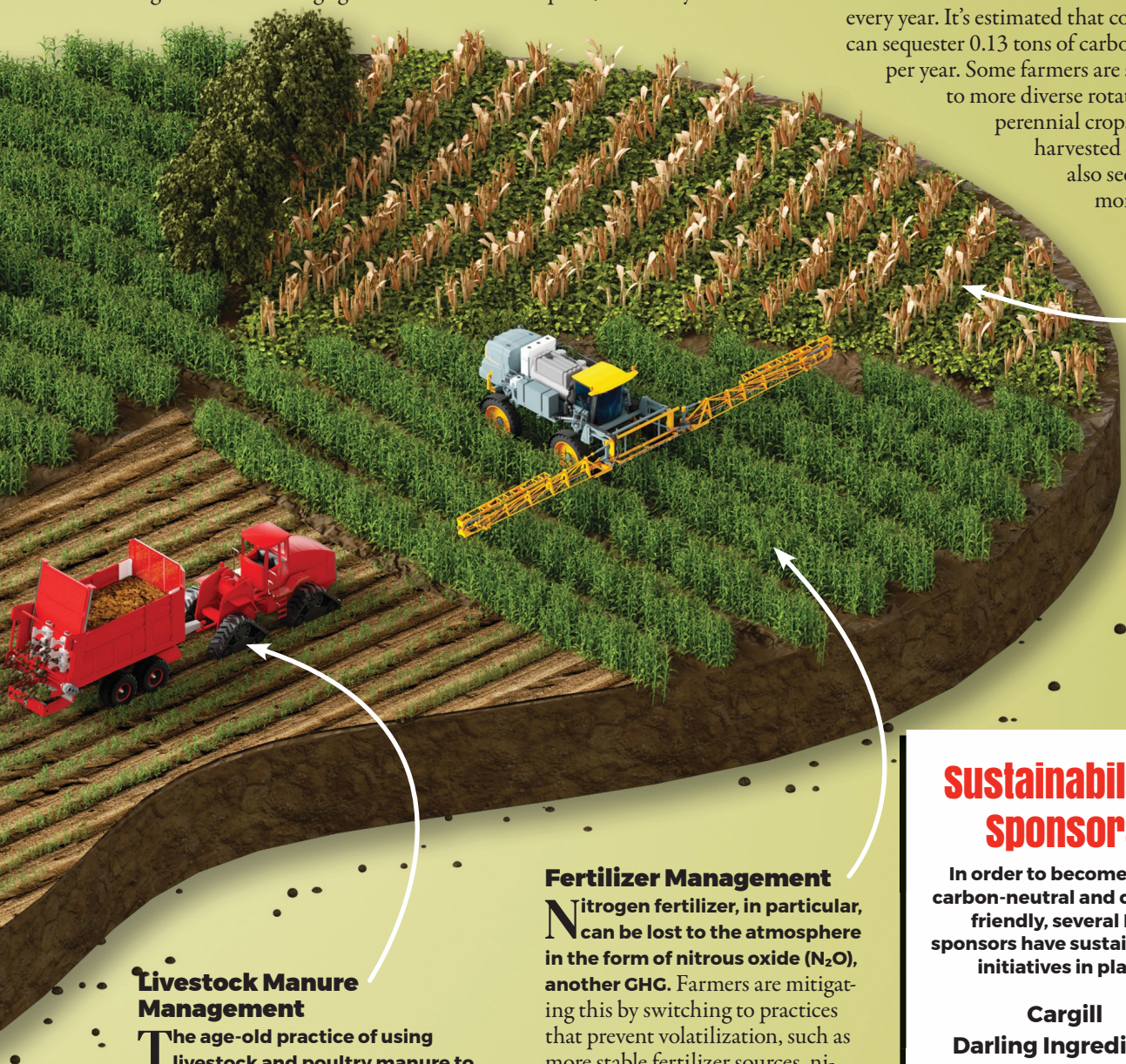
Rice fields are typically flooded during the growing season. That water on a field for long periods can release methane gas (another GHG). "Farmers and scientists have developed better flood control to limit the time water is on fields without hindering yields," Raster says. Methane emissions can be reduced by up to 2 tons of CO_2 equivalent per acre per year, she says. •

Fuel Efficiency

A companion benefit of reduced tillage is fewer tractor trips, which reduces the fossil fuels burned. It doesn't mean no trips; farmers still have to plant, apply fertilizer and pest controls, and harvest. Still, no-till may cut tractor field trips in half or better. A report from eXtension, part of the university extension cooperative, says each trip avoided may reduce diesel fuel use by a gallon per acre. More energy-efficient engines, irrigation systems and farm buildings are also reducing agriculture's carbon footprint, Raster says. •

Cover Crops

Cover crops keep a live plant growing in the soil year-round. "It means you're drawing more carbon from the atmosphere and putting it in the soil," Raster says. Cover crops are now grown on more than 10 million acres and expanding every year. It's estimated that cover crops can sequester 0.13 tons of carbon per acre per year. Some farmers are switching to more diverse rotations with perennial crops that aren't harvested every year, also sequestering more carbon. •



Livestock Manure Management

The age-old practice of using livestock and poultry manure to fertilize crops still has many benefits: more soil organic matter, more carbon sequestering, enhanced soil microbial activity and nutrient recycling. Land-based manure applications can bank another 1 ton of carbon per acre per year. Other climate-smart manure practices include covered waste lagoons to capture methane gas emissions, using the methane as a fuel to generate farm power. •

Fertilizer Management

Nitrogen fertilizer, in particular, can be lost to the atmosphere in the form of nitrous oxide (N_2O), another GHG. Farmers are mitigating this by switching to practices that prevent volatilization, such as more stable fertilizer sources, nitrogen inhibitors to hold nitrogen in place and delayed applications, Raster says. Spring or in-season applications put fertilizer on the soil close to the time of plant uptake. These practices can collectively give an equivalent reduction in GHGs of nearly 4 tons of CO_2 per acre per year. Such fertilizer tweaks may also improve water quality and reduce fertilizer costs for farmers. •

Sustainability Sponsors

In order to become more carbon-neutral and climate-friendly, several FFA sponsors have sustainability initiatives in place.

Cargill
Darling Ingredients
Elanco
Growth Energy
John Deere
Microsoft
New Holland
Nutrien Ag Solutions
Syngenta
Valent

ON LEGACY & LEADERSHIP

- By Jessica Walker Boehm

With a background in both law and academia, AC Wharton made history in 2002 when he became the first Black mayor of Shelby County, Tenn. In 2009, he was elected the 63rd mayor of Memphis, an office he remained in until 2015. Today, Wharton puts his knowledge and skills to work at the Memphis-based AC Wharton Group. Although Wharton's professional career hasn't included agriculture, his upbringing did, and he still carries the lessons he learned from agricultural education.

NH: **How would you describe your relationship to agriculture as a young boy?**
ACW: You could say agriculture is in my blood; I've always loved it. I grew up in Lebanon, Tenn., and because of my father's background in farming, he made sure we had at least a little bit of land for raising livestock like chickens, pigs and cattle.

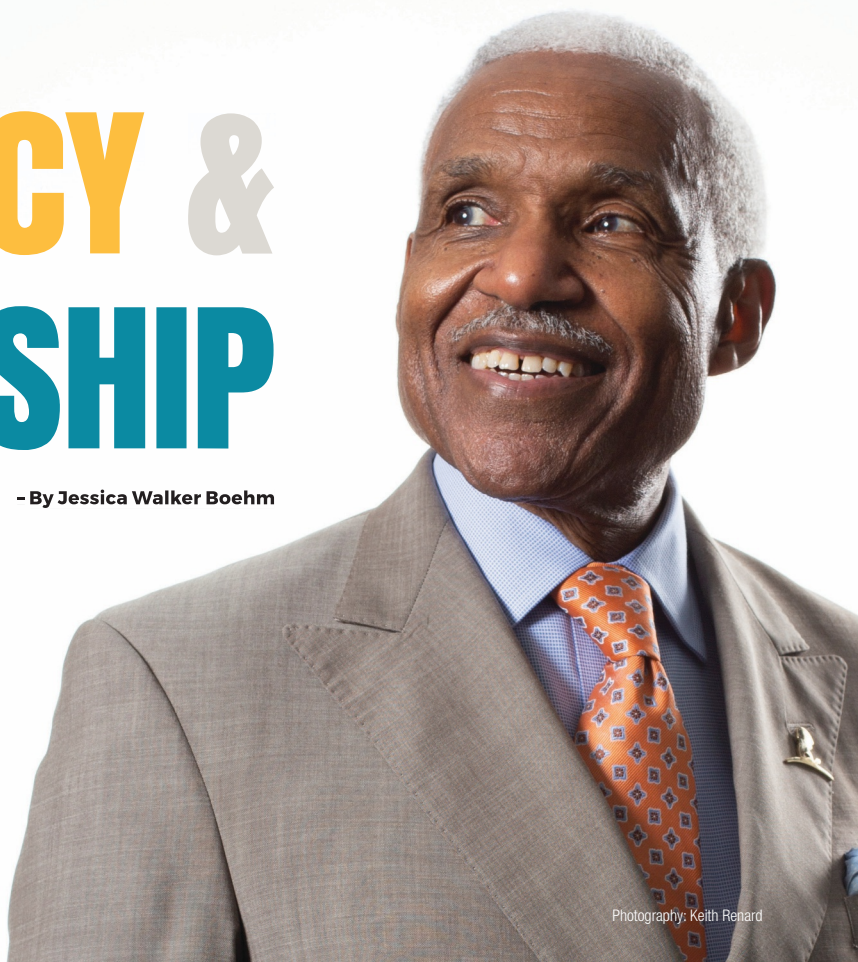
NH: **What's one of your most important takeaways from your experiences in agricultural education?**
ACW: I was part of the New Farmers of America in high school – that was in the 1950s – and at the beginning of every meeting, my chapter and I would stand together, recite the creed, and ask why we were there; what was our purpose? To this day, I come back to that question in both my personal and professional life.

NH: **Why did you decide to pursue a career in politics?**
ACW: Alongside my wife, Ruby, I fundraised for and supported the local politicians I thought would best serve our community, and I never wanted to be a politician. That changed in 2001 when the Shelby County mayor announced he wasn't going to seek reelection and many of my peers encouraged me to run for office. I decided to go for it, and the rest, as they say, is history.

NH: **What are some of your proudest career accomplishments?**
ACW: As mayor of Memphis, I established the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy, which is a nonprofit organization that manages and operates Shelby Farms Park and Shelby Farms Greenline with the Shelby County Government. That 4,500-acre area was going to be used for housing or commercial purposes, but instead, it's now one of America's largest urban parks.

NH: **What's a piece of advice you'd like to share with FFA members?**
ACW: Every day, ask yourself – just as we did in New Farmers of America – why you're here. Developing a strong sense of purpose will keep you grounded, and it adds a level of seriousness to life that many people never examine. For me, I know that my mission is to serve and help others; as long as I'm fulfilling that, I'm happy.

> "Developing a strong sense of purpose will keep you grounded, and it adds a level of seriousness to life that many people never examine."
>
> - AC Wharton



Photography: Keith Renard

AN OATH OF SERVICE

THIS CHECOTAH FFA ALUMNUS BUILDS HIS CAREER AROUND GIVING BACK.

– By Jodi Helmer

Ridge Howell credits FFA for creating connections and opportunities that helped shape his future.

Howell, a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, spoke at Native Voices, a program celebrating Native American heritage and inclusion at the 2012 National FFA Convention. There he met Janie Hipp, CEO of the Native American Agriculture Fund and a USDA National Program Leader, who invited him to represent Native American voices in Washington, D.C. A connection made through his Checotah High School FFA advisor, Jason McPeak, helped Howell land a position as a policy fellow with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative, promoting tribal solutions to food sovereignty.

"I grew up being involved with our tribe and, through FFA, I had the opportunity to be involved in tribal matters on the national level. That continued throughout [undergraduate studies at Oklahoma State University] and law school," he recalls. "I wanted to make a good career decision that would be personally fulfilling and allow me to use my knowledge and skill set to give back to others."

A legal career proved to be the answer.

FOUNDATIONS IN FFA

After graduating from the University of Oklahoma with a law degree in May 2020, Howell accepted a position at a law firm in Tulsa that focuses on protecting and enhancing Native American sovereignty.

Howell, who hopes to litigate cases in the courtroom, believes that FFA prepared him for the rigors of law school, a demanding legal career and a future arguing cases in front of juries.

"FFA has the best leadership program at the state and national level," he says. "It taught me that whether I was waking up at 5 a.m. to wash show heifers before school or preparing for speech competitions, hard work paid off."

> **"I wanted to make a good career decision that would be personally fulfilling and allow me to use my knowledge and skill set to give back to others."**
> **– Ridge Howell**

While Howell hopes that his work to protect the sovereignty of Native American tribes will be an important part of his legacy, he also wants his future to include agriculture.

He maintains a herd of cattle in Checotah and plans to be an active member of his local FFA alumni and supporters chapter, in hopes of sharing his passion and helping up-and-coming FFA members maintain a connection to the land.

"I want to recognize what the agriculture industry has done for my family. It's fed us, kept us clothed, and provided a connection to our land, to our past and to our community," he says. "I want to stay connected to the land at a time when it's so easy to be disconnected."



Ridge Howell, a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, attributes his leadership development to his time in FFA.

Photography: Courtesy Ridge Howell


2021 Guide
FFA-W
Middle Sc

to National WEEK

TIPS FOR PLANNING A GREAT EVENT, THE IMPACT OF GIVE FFA DAY AND MORE – HERE'S A 360° LOOK AT NATIONAL FFA WEEK.

BY BEV FLATT + ILLUSTRATIONS BY MATT WOOD



"I had rather be on my farm than be emperor of the world." -PRESIDENT GEORGE WASHINGTON

Starting in 1948, the National FFA Board of Directors designated a weeklong tradition to recognize George Washington's example and legacy as a leader and farmer. For the past 73 years, FFA members across the country have taken part in agricultural, leadership and service-based activities during National FFA Week.

"National FFA Week is a significant event that really showcases the heart of our organization," says Christine White, chief program officer for the National FFA Organization. "Local chapters use this as an opportunity to highlight program success, recognize community supporters and amplify the mission of the organization."

This year, more than 700,000 FFA members will spend the week of Feb. 20-27 developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. They will do so in creative and innovative ways. Whether volunteering to clean up the local fairgrounds or throwing a citywide party to celebrate the 1732 birth of our first president, there is no limit to how this week can be recognized.

"It could be hosting a breakfast for teachers, an open house for FFA supporters or bestowing chapter-level degrees. It truly is an opportunity to celebrate all things FFA. As a former member and agricultural educator, FFA Week is something I always looked forward to since it was a way to share my passion for the organization," White says. "FFA members should embrace the planning, execution and celebration that occurs with developing activities and events for FFA Week. The skills of teamwork, communication and advocating are ones you will carry with you beyond your FFA experience."

Keep track of all that is happening by following #FFAWeek on your social channels. Find more about all the resources available at **FFA.ORG/NATIONAL-FFA-WEEK.** •

WATCH OUR VIDEO

Hover your phone's camera over this code to watch a video about celebrating FFA Week remotely.

HOW TO PLAN YOUR BEST FFA WEEK YET

Do you host a trivia night? Maybe even set up an agriculture-inspired escape room? Perhaps your chapter completes service activities or plans a virtual game night. What about themed school dress-up days? No matter how your chapter chooses to celebrate National FFA Week, there are a lot of moving parts.

National FFA WEEK: DAY BY DAY

Curious how you can connect with FFA members across the country this week? Follow these National FFA Week campaigns and contribute your stories!

SUNDAY



SAE SUNDAY

Agricultural education isn't a three-component model without an SAE. Snap a photo and share your story online.

MONDAY



SERVICE & ADVOCACY DAY

Use this Presidents' Day to volunteer in your community or advocate for agriculture.

TUESDAY



ALUMNI DAY

FFA alumni and supporters are full of inspiration. Connect with one today and begin building your network for #FFAWeek.

Tips and resources like these from the National FFA Week Implementation Guide, the FFA Week Virtual Implementation Guide and the FFA Week National Days of Service Toolkit, all available at **FFA.org/National-FFA-Week**, can help keep all these details manageable.

PLANNING TOOLS

Do you need a sponsorship tool kit? Where did you save last year's roles and responsibilities file? Keep all your planning tools in line and find organizational templates you didn't even know you were missing.

GROUNDED IN STANDARDS

With all the hard work and effort that goes into planning, it makes sense to align activities to national education standards. Find the full list of relevant standards across all disciplines and give your planning a purpose.

SCRIPTS AND TEXTS

Whether it's drafting a post for social media or a script for a radio announcement, a lot of writing is involved in National FFA Week planning. Find scripts and texts for every scenario in the Media, Promotion and Advocacy section.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT US

There is no better week of the year to recognize community members, local businesses and school supporters. Find ideas and examples of how you can thank those individuals for their continued support throughout the implementation guide. •

GIVE FFA DAY:

BY THE NUMBERS

Every gift to FFA matters.

Consider the impact made during the 2019 Give FFA Day. All in a day's work.

471 DONORS

CONTRIBUTED MORE THAN

$234,000

IN ONE 24-HOUR PERIOD

TO SUPPORT MORE THAN 760,000 FFA MEMBERS

IN OVER 8,700 CHAPTERS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

WEDNESDAY



AG TEACHER APPRECIATION DAY

There is no FFA chapter without a dedicated advisor. Share how an ag teacher or advisor has impacted your life this week.

THURSDAY



GIVE FFA DAY

Spend the next 24 hours supporting this fundraising campaign to help support the various needs of FFA members.

FRIDAY



NATIONAL WEAR BLUE DAY

Whether it's navy, cerulean or national blue, don your FFA colors with pride today.


THANK YOU, ALUMNI AND SUPPORTERS!

Whether they wore the blue jacket or support an organization they were never a member of, these individuals are celebrated on National FFA Alumni and Supporters Day. Since 1971, alumni and supporters have found ways to significantly contribute to their local chapters. Jeremy Krerowicz, the past president of the Denmark FFA Alumni in Wisconsin, fondly remembers his time as a member, and he uses those experiences as motivation to lead the 2020 Outstanding FFA Alumni and Supporters Chapter.

"Our members love to see the students grow," Krerowicz says. "We love seeing them being recognized at state and national conventions, during their chapter banquet and throughout the community. It shows that we are doing our part. We help them with the resources they need to get that far."

In every state in the nation, alumni and supporters chapters work to create environments where people and communities can develop their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. They are raising funds to send members to the Washington Leadership Conference, hosting students with supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs), helping to advocate for their local chapters and more. And 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the National FFA Alumni Association. Thank you, alumni and supporters! •





Top: Wisconsin FFA Alumni Association and Denmark FFA Alumni members receive awards at the Wisconsin FFA Alumni Convention. Bottom: The Denmark FFA Alumni board doesn't forget to have some fun.

Photography: Courtesy Jeremy Krerowicz, Terra Gibson





A Grant for Growing A Greenhouse

Grants for Growing funds are raised at Tractor Supply Company stores during National FFA Week, and each year FFA chapters can apply for up to $5,000. The Grants for Growing program provides funding to support one of three areas: Grow Your Classroom, Grow Your FFA Chapter or Grow Your Ag Awareness. The National FFA Organization has seen some amazing programs over the past few years, and every FFA chapter that receives Grants for Growing funding has its own success story.

The Central Valley FFA in California recently received funding to support a year-round greenhouse that provides vegetables for the community. Students in the agriculture chemistry classes researched various soils, brands of seed and growing temperatures to ensure a successful greenhouse operation.

Is your chapter looking to apply this year? Be sure to check out **FFA.org/Grants-For-Growing** and review the chapter checklist and FAQ. You can also visit your local Tractor Supply Company store and have a conversation about the program and how to partner during the time leading up to National FFA Week. •

Top: Aryssa Tippens and Estrella Castillo-Corona work in the greenhouse. Bottom: Adam Pearson gets planting.

FFA ALUMNA MAKES AN INTERNATIONAL IMPACT

This past national officer has used her career to effect change both at home and overseas. - By Lauren Denton

It's impossible to quantify the contributions of women across agriculture. As March 8, International Women's Day, approaches, the National FFA Organization celebrates the thousands making an impact – and one specifically who is making hers global.

Anne Knapke, the 2003-04 eastern region vice president, currently serves as a senior program officer for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in Washington, D.C., where she facilitates private-sector partnerships to advance women's nutrition in Africa and south Asia. In brief: She works with companies to offer or develop fortified products for reproductive-age women facing nutrient deficiencies. The goal is to make the products available locally, so the population has access to healthier, more nutritiously diverse foods.

She joined the foundation in 2018 after serving as the legislative director for Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota. She took that post in 2015 after graduating from the University of Chicago with a dual master's degree in public policy and social work. "I've always been interested in how policy influences social issues," she says.

Cargill. Her six years in the corporate space were very valuable, she says, as she developed responsibility initiatives and learned the intricacies of domestic and international business markets.

"There are a lot of ways the private sector can influence social issues," she says. "Working at Cargill gave me footing to go back to grad school and make sustainable change."

FFA has been a strong influence, too. "There are so many ways it has subconsciously become part of what I do," Knapke says. "Diplomatic skills have helped hone my career path. How do you forge a compromise to move forward and solve problems? How do you have respectful conversations with people who have different viewpoints? My FFA experiences helped me develop critical thinking and communication skills, and I have put them to use over and over again in working with others as I've embarked on new challenges and taken on leadership roles in my career."



Anne Knapke, the 2003-04 eastern region vice president, currently serves as a senior program officer for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"My FFA experiences helped me develop critical thinking and communication skills, and I have put them to use over and over again in working with others as I've embarked on new challenges and taken on leadership roles in my career." Knapke says.

"Attending ILSSO [International Leadership Seminar for State Officers] and policy and leadership events showed me a new world," says Knapke, who grew up on a farm in Oxford, Ohio. "I began to question: Why are some people hungry? Why are some farmers in some countries doing worse than others in other countries? Why are they in poverty?"

Her journey into public policy and global food security took a long route. After she graduated from Ohio State University in 2006 with a bachelor's degree in political science and international relations, she began her career at

In fact, her career advice is this: "Give yourself permission to learn from someone else's perspective." And to women specifically, she says, "Find the places where your voice is going to be heard and use it."

Photography: Courtesy Anne Knapke

AG JOB TRENDS TO WATCH THIS YEAR

WHETHER YOU ARE LOOKING FOR YOUR FIRST SUMMER JOB OR MAKING A SIGNIFICANT CAREER CHANGE, AGCAREERS.COM IS SHARING INSIGHTS FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS OF HIRING. – By Bev Flatt

According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, the average U.S. household is now at least three generations removed from the farm. This disconnect has led to an increased need to advocate for the industry and communicate clearly and effectively the importance of production agriculture. For decades, this has been a challenge FFA members across the country have taken up through their Program of Activities (POA), supervised agriculture experience (SAE) programs, and career and leadership development events (CDEs/LDEs). This year, Gallup – which releases an annual poll that measures public opinion of U.S. business sectors – found farming and agriculture as the top-ranking industry for the first time in the poll's 20-year history. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the essential work of farmers into the spotlight.

"There are so many wonderful things about the agriculture industry that will always remain and make it a great industry to be involved in," says Erika Osmundson, director of marketing communications at AgCareers.com. "Things like work ethic, resiliency, levelheadedness and accountability come to mind. They are the foundation for production agriculture as well as our agribusinesses. But beyond those foundational pillars, we've seen more movement and attention in highlighting things like innovation, creativity, technology savvy and more in the past five years. With the pandemic, we've also shed light on the 'essential' nature of agriculture and food, which hopefully will have a positive, lasting impact on the public's viewpoint about career opportunities in the industry."

> **"We'll continue to see work in technology grow both in the field and within agricultural organizations. I think we'll also see a surge in employee engagement strategy and the workforce that helps to lead those efforts."**
> – Erika Osmundson

As agricultural education students sit in classrooms, preparing for jobs that might not yet exist, there is comfort in knowing their future lies within a vital and far-reaching industry. But what does the future of hiring look like for soon-to-be graduates?

"I don't think we'll see a huge shift in the types of jobs, but rather a focus on the virtual aspects and innovation within those types," Osmundson says. "We'll continue to see work in technology grow both in the field and within agricultural organizations. I think we'll also see a surge in employee engagement strategy and the workforce that helps to lead those efforts."

While future careers may seem a long way off for some, it is never too early to begin making decisions that will impact those plans. FFA members can start exploring careers early through **AgExplorer.com**, and see SAE ideas, career spotlights and prep materials for various fields. FFA alumni and supporters can connect with fellow members and expand their networks through **ForeverBlueNetwork.org**. Anyone looking to work in agriculture can visit **AgCareers.com** to see the latest job postings in the industry.

Photography: Getty Images, Blaine Harrington III

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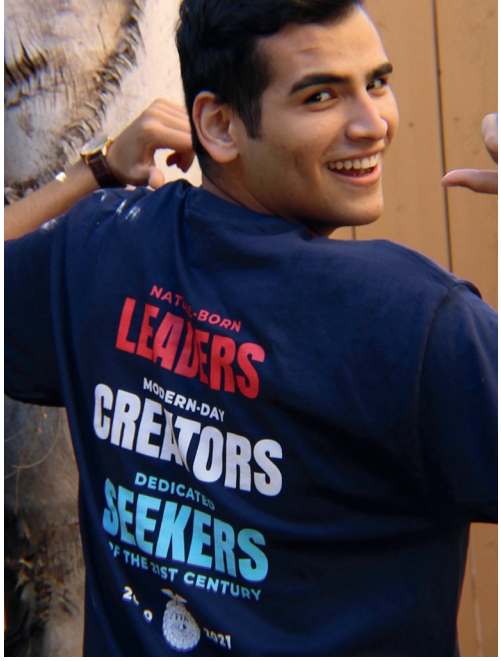





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AN EQUINE EDUCATION

THIS ONE-OF-A-KIND PROGRAM INTRODUCES FFA MEMBERS TO CAREERS IN THE EQUINE INDUSTRY.

STORY BY JODI HELMER

Photography: Courtesy Charlie Crouch



Locust Trace FFA member Lily Crouch



This photo: Lily Crouch practices jumping skills.
Opposite: Saniyah Smith receives guidance from equine instructor Jermo Reese.

ERICK TORRES STARTED GOING TO THE HORSE STABLES WHEN HE WAS JUST 8 YEARS OLD. HE TAGGED ALONG WITH HIS DAD, A PROFESSIONAL HORSE GROOM, TO HELP BATHE AND BRUSH THE THOROUGHBREDS.

The experience convinced Torres, now 18, that he wanted a career working with horses. When he learned that Locust Trace AgriScience Center in Lexington, Ky., had an equine program for high school students, he couldn't wait to sign up. The program exceeded his expectations.

"It was really fast-paced and really fun, and I learned a lot of things," Torres says. "It gave me a special boost."

After his 2020 graduation, Torres accepted a job at the iconic Thoroughbred Center in Lexington as a horse groom and set his sights on becoming an equine veterinarian. Torres believes the high school program provided the skills and confidence he needs to take his equine career to the next level.

The equine program has been part of the curriculum since Locust Trace opened its doors in 2011. A new partnership between Fayette County Public Schools and the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association has expanded the offering, making the program available to all high school students attending the career and technical high school in Lexington.

"An equine program just makes sense in the horse capital of the world," notes Logan Layne, agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Locust Trace.

Although Lexington is considered the horse capital of the world, many of the students in Fayette County Public Schools have had little interaction with horses. Through the program and membership in the Locust Trace FFA chapter, more than 2,400 students will gain knowledge and exposure to the myriad career possibilities in the equine industry.



Logan Layne



Fallon Jackson

"It's all about exposure," says Anne DeMott, principal at Locust Trace. "Students might not associate a career in technology with agriculture at all, but if we can let students job shadow or take them to places to see how they could take that interest and combine it with agriculture, those experiences are crucial in building a new generation of agriculturalists."

USING THE THREE-CIRCLE MODEL

Saniyah Smith had no interest in working with horses until she was inadvertently enrolled in the equine program. Now, the Locust Trace senior hopes to study equine science and management in college and pursue a career in equine dentistry or therapy.

"The equine pathway is so hands-on; you're working with horses every day," Smith says. "I like being hands-on, seeing and touching the horses and being able to look at the different parts of their bodies and say, 'Oh, this is what it looks like, this is what it feels like.' It's more fun and you can remember it better than just looking at it on a piece of paper."

Torres agrees. He often points out different parts of the equine anatomy while bathing and grooming horses – and even shares the information with his dad.

"He's really happy that I'm learning lots of things," Torres explains. "He's sometimes right next to me when I'm doing equine work, and he'll say things like, 'I didn't know that body part.' We're just both learning new things."

The hands-on learning environment is one of the biggest benefits of the expanded equine program, according to Fallon Jackson, agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Locust Trace.

FFA members are exposed to each component of the three-circle model, combining premier leadership, personal growth and career success. They use lessons from the classroom during their field trips and volunteer opportunities at 23 participating horse farms around Lexington.

"It's the partnership with local farms that makes this program stand out," she says. "Being able to set students up with internships and experiences will put them leaps and bounds ahead of the competition for career opportunities."

Through the equine



Photography: Courtesy Charlie Crouch, Jermo Reese and Logan Layne

program, Smith, 17, has volunteered with the Kentucky Horse Park and the Kentucky Equine Adoption Center. She also spent time teaching students from nearby Nicholasville Elementary School about equine anatomy; the difference between a walk, trot, canter and gallop; and the proper technique for haltering a horse.

"The program's unique because they give you chances that most kids don't have," she says. "I'd never worked with horses, and now I'm taking equine classes. I went from somebody who knew almost nothing about horses to feeling confident talking about horses and going out and volunteering."

MORE THAN HORSIN' AROUND

While Locust Trace FFA members often cite spending time with horses as one of the biggest advantages of participating in the equine program, the classes are about more than just horsin' around.

Several FFA members have used the program as a foundation for their supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs). Layne points to members who have developed SAEs to educate others about the equine industry's importance in Kentucky.

"I've seen students, even from last year to this year, maturing so much because of the responsibilities they took on in the equine program," he adds. "They are developing the skills they need to be successful in the industry."

Lily Crouch has known she wanted to work with horses since she was little. Although she had a lot of experience riding horses and participating in competitions, Crouch, 17, admits she didn't know much about what happened behind the scenes or potential career pathways that would allow her to work with Thoroughbreds. The equine program at Locust Trace changed that.

"It's amazing, considering we're in the middle of Lexington, to have a program for city kids who have the passion and the drive to want to be in the ag industry," Crouch says.

After she graduates from Locust Trace in 2021, Crouch hopes to double major in education and equine science and management with a minor in animal science. Crouch isn't sure what career path she'll pursue, but thanks to her experiences at Locust Trace, she knows her future includes working with horses.

Kentucky horse farms often struggle to hire skilled workers, and they have high hopes that the equine program at Locust Trace will create a school-to-farm employment pipeline that offers opportunities for students from all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds who are often underrepresented in the equine industry. The impact could last for generations.

"The industry has such a need for qualified employees that they're willing to invest to help create that passion and excitement about horses and, hopefully, drive them to pursue careers in the Thoroughbred industry," DeMott says. "It speaks volumes that we have an industry that believes in what we're doing and is willing to wait on a return on their investment."

Local colleges have taken note, too. Several schools, including Midway University, Bluegrass Community and Technical College and the University of Kentucky, have promised scholarships to select students graduating from the equine program.

Jackson says the program is all about redefining what it means to pursue a career in agriculture, adding, "A lot of city and suburban kids think FFA and agriculture aren't for them, but, through this program, we can introduce them to opportunities that line up with their interests and flip that script." •

"IT'S AMAZING, CONSIDERING WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF LEXINGTON, TO HAVE A PROGRAM FOR CITY KIDS WHO HAVE THE PASSION AND THE DRIVE TO WANT TO BE IN THE AG INDUSTRY," LILY CROUCH SAYS.



Photography: Courtesy Kennedy Spriggs and Charlie Crouch



This photo: Lily Crouch gives her horse a wash. Opposite: Locust Trace FFA member Kennedy Spriggs works with her off-track Thoroughbred, Pesto.



Alexa Kuhn, Waupun FFA president, holds one of the more than 600 signs donated and distributed by the chapter last spring.

In the face of a school shutdown, this Wisconsin chapter retools to provide its community much-needed support.

By Mark Moore
Photography by Bob Stefko

DEVOTED TO #DAIRYSTRONG

When school shutdowns occurred across the country last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it left a lot of students – and FFA chapters – in limbo. It wasn't just the in-person meetings that took a hit. Annual activities that were staples of a chapter's social and service calendar were suddenly erased.

Yet, as they say, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. That's precisely what happened for the members of the Waupun FFA Chapter in Wisconsin. Chapter members, officers and advisors turned these challenges into opportunities and, along the way, lived to serve.

"When this all started last spring, we all were in very poor spirits," Cole Hicken, chapter vice president, says of the pandemic. "There are several things we look forward to every year, like Day on the Farm. And when those things were canceled, we all were disappointed."

But that's when the wheels started spinning, and officers and advisors came together to find ways the FFA chapter could continue. "What was happening wasn't just impacting the school; it was impacting the entire community," Hicken says. "So, we started holding virtual meetings and exchanging text messages to work on something that we could do."

Seeing Signs

Located in the heart of dairy country, the Waupun FFA Chapter was intimately familiar with the hardships that dairy producers faced as the pandemic shutdowns started. The entire dairy chain was under stress. That's when the chapter jumped into action.

It started with $2,400 in seed money. The chapter used that money to print 300 signs with the #DairyStrong hashtag and distributed them throughout the community. "Members wanted to do something to support the dairy industry," says Tari Costello, Waupun FFA advisor.

Soon, local businesses joined and worked with the chapter to promote and support the dairy industry. The sign campaign expanded, and in the spring and early summer of 2020, the chapter coordinated the distribution of 58,800 pounds of milk, cheese, frozen custard, potatoes, sour cream, butter and more, worth more than $75,000, to the community.

"The amazing part was that through the entire program, we did not ask for a single donation," Costello says. "Businesses would call the chapter and ask how they could participate."

The chapter also supported the school lunch program with cheese and yogurt donated by local processors.

FFA advisor Kris Beaver says that during the giveaways, people would come forward with unsolicited donations. The chapter piled those donations back into the program to keep it going. It expanded to include not only dairy but also beef, pork and vegetables. Beyond simply donating products to the community, it was also working to support producers by purchasing their products. "Every week, we were surprised at the amount of donations we would receive, so we just kept the program going," Beaver says.



The program culminated with the distribution of 25-pound packs of dairy products. It was significant because it marked the first time that students could actively participate in the distribution. Until then, because of COVID-19 restrictions, students worked behind the scenes at the other product giveaways but could not participate in person.

"I did not realize how big the program had grown until that day," says Alexa Kuhn, chapter president. The town of Waupun isn't accustomed to traffic jams, but on that day, Main Street was a parking lot. The location where the products were being distributed was packed two hours before members arrived. "That's when I saw the kind of impact we were having on the community. It was simply amazing," she says.

But just because the members couldn't always participate

Above: The Waupun FFA Chapter officers.
Below: Waupun FFA advisors Tari Costello (left) and Ryan Seichter (right).
Opposite: Cole Hicken, Waupun FFA vice president, with a sample of the products the chapter donated.







The chapter coordinated the distribution of

58,000

pounds of milk, cheese, frozen custard, potatoes, sour cream, butter and more.

in person didn't mean they didn't contribute. Weekly virtual meetings kept members updated on the program, and the members would brainstorm ideas.

"We used a lot of social media to advocate for the program," says Hannah Scholten, chapter secretary. "It was tough not to be able to participate physically, but we did what we could, and social media was a tremendous asset."

The chapter's work was noticed throughout the state. After the #DairyStrong campaign, the Wisconsin Pork Association approached the chapter for help developing a way for Wisconsin pork producers to distribute their goods due to market disruptions created by the pandemic. The chapter became the first to put together Passion for Pork bundles, and more than 3,000 pounds of pork was sold through the program. "That program was a direct result of the chapter's efforts," Beaver says. "The Wisconsin Pork Association reached out to us after hearing about our program."

The Wisconsin Historical Society has asked for chapter materials to help document how the pandemic impacted the state and how the community responded.

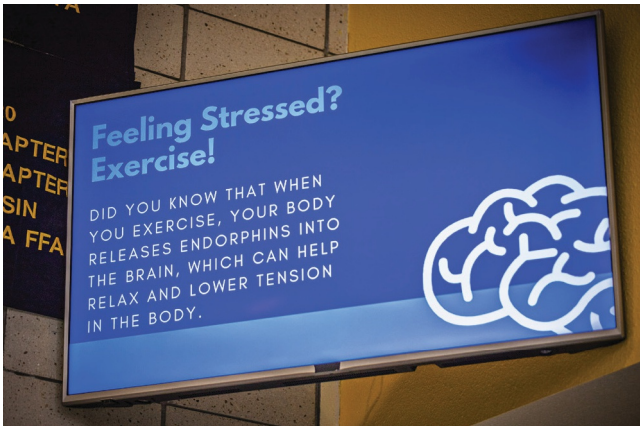
Adapting to the New Normal

"I have to commend our chapter for adapting to what was happening around them," Costello says. "Instead of throwing up their hands, they looked at the situation and figured out how to make these things happen in spite of the obstacles before them."

Kuhn says it's a matter of remaining positive. "FFA and our advisors have taught us that we need to be positive, even in the darkest of times," she says. "I've been stopped by people at our local supermarket because I have my FFA mask on, and they thank our chapter for the program. This would not have happened if we had just waited around. We were proactive and we definitely helped our community."

Hicken says the program has given him a whole new outlook. "We are here to serve, and the past year has shown us that a chapter can serve its community no matter what obstacles may be in the way," he says. "I now know that even at the darkest points there is always a light you can find. FFA and my chapter work have helped me see that." •





MEETING STUDENT NEEDS

While the Waupun FFA Chapter's #DairyStrong program has been wildly successful in providing a valuable service to the community, the wide-ranging impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was not lost on chapter officers.

"Mental health isn't always discussed, but we wanted to provide students a place to turn if they are having a tough time," says chapter secretary Hannah Scholten.

So Scholten and Cole Hicken, chapter vice president, are spearheading an initiative to provide more mental health awareness in the school and the community. Screens at school provide information about mental health and resources available. "It's an issue that's not often talked about," Hicken says. "But it's an issue that's impacting some students. We want to provide information that can help."

The chapter also operates the Clothes Closet, a room at the school where students can access clothing and personal hygiene products free of charge. "Students can go there anonymously, so they don't feel embarrassed, and it has products that they may need but can't afford," Scholten says.

Alexa Kuhn, chapter president, says these initiatives aren't just about agriculture. "They are about community service," she says. •



This photo: Hannah Scholten, Waupun FFA secretary, in the chapter-operated Clothes Closet. Opposite top: Waupun FFA advisor Kris Beaver. Opposite below: To promote mental health, the chapter shares positive information each week via electronic school announcements.

The chapter also operates the **Clothes Closet,** a room at the school where students can access clothing and personal hygiene products **free of charge.**

[PERSONAL GROWTH]

WELLNESS *in the* WORRY

When life gets turned upside down, try these tips to find balance and peace.

– By Jessica Mozo

If you've been feeling more anxious than usual in recent months, you're not alone. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a spike in anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns for people across the globe. Physical distancing has made life especially challenging for teens who enjoy social interactions with friends at school, sports and organizations such as FFA.

Without a doubt, school and extracurricular activities look different for FFA members now than they did one year ago. Some students are attending school in person, while others are learning virtually from home.

"Teens are already dealing with the normal stressors they feel related to social relationships, academics and family life, and now they have added Zoom fatigue and an increase in time being spent on electronics and computers," says Janelle Stewart, co-author of a Michigan State University Extension report called "Youth Farm Stress."

Virtual learning alone is a stressor because students have to adapt to a whole new process of learning, submitting assignments and taking tests.

"Most students are used to being face-to-face and having social connections with their peers and teachers, so virtual learning has been very challenging," says Kea Norrell-Aitch, co-author of the report. "We also hear a lot of students say how stressful test-taking is, including exams and standardized tests. Preparing for the SAT and ACT takes academic stress to another level because those tests determine their future and often dictate their next step after graduation,



such as which college they'll attend."

Experts say one of the best things you can do to manage anxiety is create your own self-care plan.

"While many teens have a sense of when they are feeling overwhelmed, anxious or depressed, they don't always know what to do about it," Norrell-Aitch says. "A self-care plan is something you can act upon whenever you feel stressed or saddened about things going on in your household, community or nation. Think of ways to improve your social, emotional and physical well-being. Your plan should definitely include getting proper nutrition by eating balanced meals, getting outside and connecting with nature, and getting adequate sleep – at least eight hours each night."

Without a doubt, school and extracurricular activities look different for FFA members now than they did one year ago. Some students are attending school in person, while others are learning virtually from home.

Remember that your self-care plan may look different than your best friend's plan.

"It's an individualized plan," Stewart says. "Riding my bike may be a stress reliever for me, but not for you. It's very much about what helps you."

Include a variety of things in your plan, and remember that doing everything in moderation is important.

"We all get out of balance from time to time," Norrell-Aitch says, "but we should strive to get back to that balance to keep our minds and bodies healthy and well."

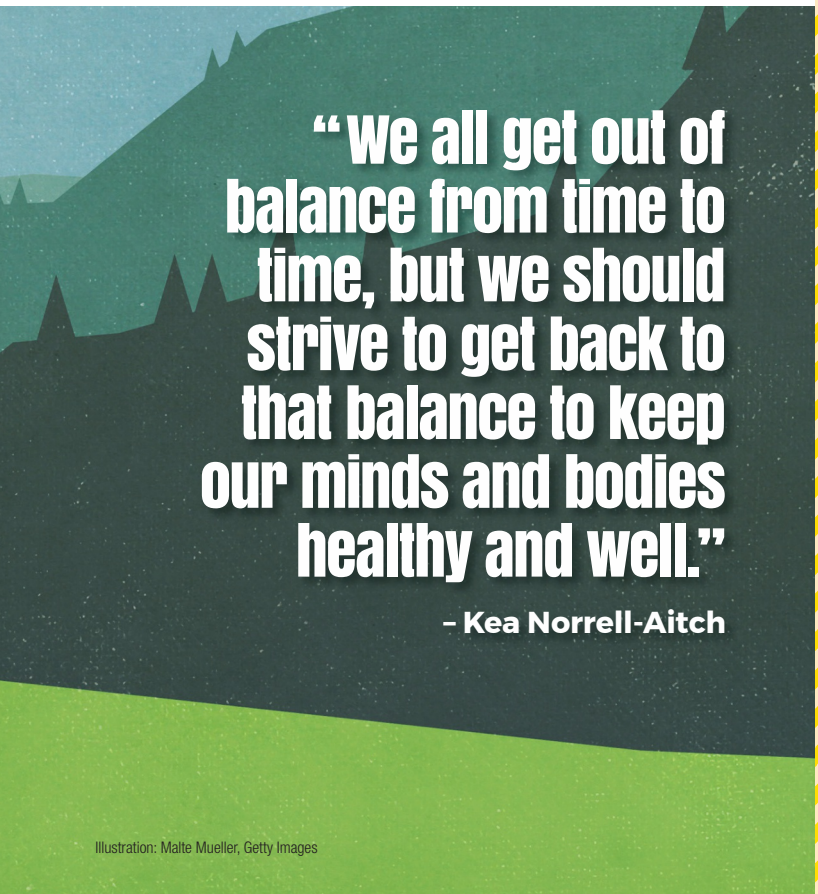


Illustration: Malte Mueller, Getty Images

8 Ideas for self-care

In addition to eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep and spending time outdoors, consider including these ideas in your self-care plan.

1. Identify and talk with an adult you trust, whether it's a parent, coach, teacher, neighbor or FFA advisor. Studies show having a caring adult in your life is proven to reduce suicidal tendencies among teens.
2. Avoid caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant, and the jittery effects it has on your body can provoke anxiety.
3. Do something kind for someone or take part in a community service project.
4. Cook a meal with your family or engage in another fun family activity.
5. Go to the theater, an art gallery or other creative venues.
6. Focus on positive talk. Negative talk creates a downward spiral, while positive talk can lift your mood.
7. Limit your time on social media. Ask yourself if social media is contributing to your stress level. If the answer is yes, take a break from it.
8. Get outdoors and take a hike. Physical activity has been proven to reduce stress and improve your ability to sleep.



ON THE RECORD: STEVE ROSENZWEIG

Soil health expert Steve Rosenzweig of global food company and FFA sponsor General Mills is a popular speaker and writer on soil health principles and practices. In honor of Earth Day, observed on April 22, we asked him why this has become a front-burner issue for farmers and agribusiness and what farmers and others are doing to unravel these underground secrets. - By Gene Johnston

"Knowledge and passion, strong communication skills and leadership are all traits that make an effective soil health practitioner. The entire industry is yearning for more people like that."
– STEVE ROSENZWEIG

General Mills soil health expert Steve Rosenzweig



Q: Why are we seeing a renewed interest in soil health now?

A: I think it's a combination of new insights from soil science research, innovations by farmers and ranchers, and a big educational campaign by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Q: What are some healthy soil practices farmers are incorporating?

A: There are six principles they are implementing in a system – minimize soil disturbance, keep the soil covered, maximize plant diversity, keep a living root in the ground as long as possible throughout the year, integrate livestock and do this all within the unique context of your farming operation. There are hundreds of practices that can be used to achieve those principles, and practices are emerging in different contexts. For instance, in Canada, farmers are experimenting with intercropping, where multiple cash crops grow at the same time to maximize diversity. In Kansas, they're terminating cover crops with a roller-crimper to minimize soil disturbance.

Q: Is there an easy way to begin to measure soil health?

A: One simple thing anyone can do is take a shovel and dig. Look at the color (darker is better), the smell (earthy and rich) and how crumbly it is (like cottage cheese).

Q: What are the costs and returns to soil health practices?

A: Cover crop seed, fencing and water for livestock, and new equipment can potentially add costs when transitioning. There is also the cost of time to learn new things. But the returns can be great. Farmers can maintain or increase yields while reducing expensive inputs. They can improve resilience to weather extremes. Maybe most importantly, farmers who are managing for soil health report being more optimistic about the future, having more fun farming, and being less stressed. That's not to mention all of the benefits to the environment and society more broadly.

Q: Why is this effort important to General Mills?

A: As a food company that's been around for over 150 years, we know that the only way we'll be around for another 150 is with resilient farmers and strong ecosystems. We are piloting a range of strategies to figure out how to most meaningfully grow this movement.

Q: Does this topic suggest career opportunities for young people?

A: Conservation districts, NRCS, consultants, university Extensions and farmers need good employees to improve soil health. Knowledge and passion, strong communication skills and leadership are all traits that make an effective soil health practitioner. The entire industry is yearning for more people like that.

Photography: Getty Images, ThomasVogel, Courtesy Steve Rosenzweig

FFA in the USA

Welcome to 2021! We may not be back to some semblance of normal quite yet, but that won't stop FFA chapters from serving their communities this spring, summer and beyond. Check out some of the events and activities chapters are doing around the country. — Compiled by Julie Woodard

Alabama

Each spring, J.B. Pennington FFA partners with community members to host a farm equipment auction and consignment sale.

Alaska

Chapters across the state have been busy helping their local communities solve problems associated with COVID-19. Many chapters constructed hydroponic grow towers that will help schools provide fresh produce.

Arkansas

Arkansas FFA took to social media to promote #AgInEverything, showcasing the cross-curricular overlap of supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs) with core subjects like math, science and English.

California

As the state pivots toward increased involvement and inclusion, its annual Made for Excellence and Advance Leadership conferences are in full swing. The conferences feature online sessions, individual activities and Zoom breakout rooms.

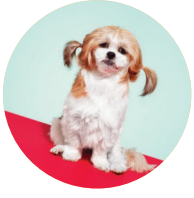
Colorado



Cedaredge FFA honors local veterans with a "Patriotic Salute." Members work with veterans to display a field of 35 large flags and graveside markers to honor our fallen heroes.

Connecticut

Lyman Hall FFA and companion animal science students run a Doggie Daycare program, where they try out grooming skills learned in class on the school staff's dogs.



Delaware

Chapters, including Appo and Middletown FFA, hosted social-distanced backyard banquets to recognize members and their successes in a safe environment.

Florida

Middleburg FFA hosts an "Unlimited Opportunities Goat Show" to give special needs students hands-on experiences with animals.

Hawaii

Waipahu FFA has partnered with a local business to develop an online store to help generate more profit for its chapter.

Idaho

Because it wasn't possible to hold the annual Kuna High School veterans assembly, Kuna FFA members placed signs of appreciation in some of their local veterans' yards.

Illinois

State officers will host a new virtual conference, "Ground Zero," which will present workshops on passion, character, relationship building and goal-setting.

Iowa

Calamus-Wheatland FFA members volunteered at local polling places on Election Day to help with the declines in polling recruitment due to COVID-19.

Kansas

Member Cali Newdigger is learning about agriculture from all 50 states through her SAE, "50 States of FFA." She shares products with chapters in other states.

Kentucky

In partnership with Jefferson County Farm Bureau, Seneca FFA helps facilitate the Nulu Bock Fest in Louisville. The chapter organizes and manages a petting zoo and agricultural education stations and assists in the goat races.

Louisiana

When Hurricane Laura struck the state, members answered the call to serve. Several chapters conducted supply drives for affected agricultural education programs. The Elton and St. Amant FFA chapters joined forces to raise money to purchase new jackets for members who lost them. Florien FFA also purchased lost Official Dress for members. We are thankful for these chapters and their contributions!

Maryland

Parkside FFA has prepared its largest-ever offering of container plants this spring. As home gardening blooms worldwide, the chapter has annuals, perennials, vegetables and herbs available for customers.

Massachusetts

Silver Lake Horticulture FFA has been doing some amazing work, including clearing land for its school to build a new garage site and using some wood for a firewood and custom sawmilling fundraiser.



Michigan

FFA members spent September and October preparing for the state broiler contest in November. Members participating in the contest raise 25 birds in a competitive setting and bring three birds to Munsell's Poultry Processing. The birds are judged on weight, uniformity, conformation and a project write-up.

Missouri

Members attended State FFA Leadership Camp through a virtual platform called "Show-Me Leadership Summit." They gained the same experiences that camp provides, but from the comfort of their homes.

Montana

"From sunup to past sundown, we were always doing activities that helped develop leadership, whether we knew it or not," reflects Joey TeSelle of the Belgrade FFA, who participated in the 2020 Agricultural Opportunities Tour. Donning their masks, FFA members toured 20 locations in northeastern Montana and met with agriculturists, agronomists and business owners.

Thank you, state officers, for providing news and events for your states.

Photography and Illustrations: Getty Images, jaflippo, Ilka & Franz, EyeEm, bukko, Tetiana Shustyk

Nebraska

Putting the safety of members and staff first, the state decided to conduct leadership conferences and competitions virtually. BerMis FFA connected through Zoom with past National FFA Officer Ridge Hughbanks. He challenged members to make the most of FFA and their time in it, and to step out of their comfort zones.

Nevada

This year, state officers plan to conduct monthly virtual workshops as part of a Chapter Officer Leadership Development Series.

New Hampshire

Starting a new tradition, the Granite State Association of FFA will have a Valentine's Day Cornhole Fundraiser to help raise money for agricultural education in the state.



New Jersey

At the Monmouth County Fair in late July, the Freehold, Monmouth County and Allentown FFA chapters take part in a produce fundraiser that helps fund their chapter activities for the year. These chapters receive donations of produce, such as peaches, blueberries, eggplants and sunflowers, from local farmers.

New Mexico

New Mexico FFA has started its first-ever feature-length podcast. The state officer team takes turns hosting biweekly episodes that discuss everything from leadership to the state's ag landscape with industry professionals, community members and other special guests.

New York

Members are enjoying the state's FFA Pen Pal Program, interacting with members from across the state.

North Carolina

Members convene at the North Carolina FFA Center in White Lake for the annual State Leadership Conference each July. FFA members join to develop relationships, leadership skills and a desire to serve.

North Dakota

Carrington FFA hosted a plastic flamingo "flocking" event in which members put plastic flamingos in yards and received monetary donations from community members to "flock" other yards. All proceeds were donated to Carrington CHI St. Alexius Breast Cancer Assistance Program.

Ohio

Crestview FFA hosts a Food for America program around Mother's Day. Third-grade students rotate between stations that feature different aspects of agriculture, including a welding demonstration, butter making, flower planting, coloring, an equipment tour and a horse-drawn wagon ride.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma FFA members attended the first-ever virtual alumni camp via Zoom, following the camp curriculum from their homes.

Oregon

Henley FFA jumped to action to serve its local food bank, which had a low number of volunteers due to COVID-19. The chapter packed over 220 food boxes for families in need, while practicing social distancing.

Pennsylvania

Cumberland Valley FFA hosted a Zoom Across the Globe, where members heard from Peace Corps volunteers who worked in Africa to develop sustainable agriculture projects and increase food security.

Puerto Rico

In collaboration with the western regional officers and other local organizations, the state officers gave food "agroboxes" to the citizens of Moca.

South Dakota

Chapters take part in a community service event called Feed The Farmers, where members deliver meals to farmers during planting season.



Texas

As part of the Texas FFA Association's yearlong service initiative, members across the state donate worn-out jeans to The Blue Jeans Go Green program that recycles denim back to its natural fiber state, then into new and useful items.

Virginia

In July, the state officers attended the Farm Bureau Summer Expo in which they toured multiple farms in the state and heard from guest speakers who work with food distribution.

Washington

State officers put out monthly "HARVEST" videos, showcasing the wide variety of agriculture across the Evergreen State to help members gain new perspectives about their industry.

West Virginia

Every March since 1941, the state hosts the State Ham, Bacon and Egg Show and Sale. Members across the state cure and smoke items to be entered for judging.

Wisconsin

Many chapters gave back to their communities by raising funds through selling Ag Strong signs or partnering with local businesses to host food drives and ag product giveaways for those in need.



Members, submit your chapter updates at FFA.org/Submit-Your-Story.

MEDIA CENTER

ARTS & CULTURE IN AGRICULTURE

– By Jessica Wesson

PODCASTS

Check out these four podcasts from all around agriculture.

Homesteady

Austin Martin, owner of Squash Hollow Farm, hosts a podcast that focuses on sustainability, food production and personal experiences as a homesteader. ***thisishomesteady.com***

Farm to Table Talk

In Farm To Table Talk, host Rodger Wasson hosts conversations with chefs, farmers, policy makers, researchers, NGOs and the food-focused public about our food and how it is grown, prepared and shared throughout society. ***farmtotabletalk.com***

Farm Traveler

Trevor Williams' mission is to inform consumers about the people who produce their food. His guests talk about what it takes to raise crops and animals, the science of food production and the technology it takes to keep grocery store shelves full. ***thefarmtraveler.com***

Girls Talk Ag

Jennifer Campbell, a farmer/blogger, along with Karen Corrigan, an agronomist, and Kelsey Litchfield, an agriculture digital media consultant, discuss their perspectives about the agricultural industry's latest buzz. ***globalagnetwork.com/girls-talk-ag/podcast***

DOCUMENTARY

THE AMERICAN FARM



This History channel series shines a light on family farms across the country.

"The American Farm" gives a look inside five American family farms, each facing unique challenges that must be overcome to keep their businesses alive. Over the course of a yearlong period, the series shows the risks and rewards of being a modern-day farmer and helps viewers understand how their food gets from the field to their plates. ***history.com/shows/the-american-farm***

BLOG

Blooming Into Agriculture

Join this Missouri FFA member as she advocates for agriculture.



Fort Osage FFA member Morgan Watkins expresses her passion for agriculture with a new blog, called Blooming Into Agriculture. Watkins was inspired to start blogging during the COVID-19 pandemic to remain connected to her peers and to help fellow members realize that they don't have to come from an agricultural background to be involved in FFA. Read about her hope for the industry and meet other students from around the country who are in love with agriculture. ***bloomingintoagriculture.com***

Photography: Edwin Remsberg, Getty Images, Courtesy Morgan Watkins



FFA Moment

1953 **Iowa Falls FFA** members gather around their winning hog at the FFA 25th Anniversary Pageant during the National FFA Convention in Kansas City, Mo. Even then, the organization had established its roots in livestock showing, which gave members the chance to showcase skills learned in the classroom in a real-life setting. Skills such as proper handling and public speaking come in handy in the show ring. Livestock shows and judging competitions have moved beyond evaluation and remain central to the lives of many FFA members today. Members learn the value of hard work, dedication, responsibility and record keeping – all from raising an animal in a way that ensures success at county and state fairs, and beyond. Whether you'll step into the show ring this spring or plan to show your livestock in the fall, you're part of a legacy of livestock-showing success. You share your love for the competition and care for your animals with members who came before you, and those who will come after you.

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