Spring/Summer 2023

NEW HORIZONS®

FFA.ORG





ALL ABOUT AG CAREERS

Agriculture has no shortage of career options, and the abundance and variety mean there's likely something to meet the interests of most every job seeker. Just think: One day, you could be one of those people who truly love their job. We've devoted this issue of *FFA New Horizons* to helping you discover an ag career that's right for you.

For example, in "6 Unusual Careers in Ag" on page 16, we share job profiles, education recommendations and salaries for unexpected ag jobs. Think zoologist, sports turf manager and wind turbine technologist. Yes, those are ag careers!

A flavor technologist also works in agriculture (believe it or not!) and helps develop flavors used in food and drink products. If you have an interest in STEM coursework, a keen sense of taste and smell, and a strong interest in cooking and recipe development, this ag career could be worth considering. Learn more in "Yes, This Is an Ag Career!" on page 6.

If you're curious about what to do right after high school — go to trade school or college or head straight to the workforce — check out "Class or Career" on page 12. The chart weighs the benefits and disadvantages of various pathways to full-time work.

In addition to many more stories about ag career exploration, you'll find articles about a community effort to save its agricultural education program and FFA chapter, lessons learned by a first-generation farmer, the upgraded AgExplorer.FFA.org website, how corporate alumni and supporter chapters support National FFA Week, and much more.

Enjoy the magazine and have a super spring and summer!

Justin Davey

Justin Davey
Editor, *FFA New Horizons*
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AG Careers

To easily navigate to the jobs articles throughout this issue, keep an eye out for the ag careers icon.

CORRECTION: The article titled "70 Years of FFA Stories" in our fall/winter 2022 issue stated that President Lyndon B. Johnson spoke at the 40th National FFA Convention. National officers met with President Johnson that year, but he did not speak at national convention.

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THE FFA VISION
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.

DIVERSITY STATEMENT
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.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STATEMENT
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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Cover Story

16 **6 Unusual Careers in Ag** There is a job in agriculture to meet virtually every interest. We have proof. Take a look!

Students at Warrenton High School in Missouri now have the opportunity to learn metal fabrication, thanks to generous community support. They were also able to keep their FFA chapter intact. P. 30

THE FEED

5 Things FROM FFA.ORG

Scan with your phone

FFA.org offers great resources right at your fingertips!

National FFA Week

Celebrate the organization you love Feb. 18-25. Each day brings a new theme that shines a light on FFA and supports the organization, from SAE Sunday to National Wear Blue Day to FFA Alumni Day and more.

FFA Resume Generator

Looking for tips and tricks to get a jump start on creating a winning resume? The FFA Resume Generator asks step-by-step questions about your education, work experience and FFA participation, then exports your resume in a variety of formats, including a PDF or Microsoft Word document that is ready for immediate use. Give it a try!

2023 Student Workshops

Did you know National FFA has built a series of video workshops designed to help members grow and succeed in areas such as entrepreneurship, mentorship, ag literacy and more? Considering a job in agriculture? Be inspired with "From A-Z There's an Ag Career for Me" session.

FFA Help Center

You have questions. National FFA has answers. From membership to merchandise, convention to conferences, the FFA Help Center has you covered.

SAE Video Library

FFA has lots of ideas and inspiration for your supervised agricultural experience (SAE). Browse the SAE Video Library for ideas from current and former members. Whether pet grooming, composting or zookeeping, there's no shortage of variety — and creativity.

An Even Better AgExplorer

The powerful ag career site just got a helpful upgrade.

– By Lauren Denton



As Megan McGrady, senior education consultant at the National FFA Organization, describes it, "The most robust ag career tool for teachers and students to explore over 300 careers" is now even better. Scheduled to launch in January, the updated AgExplorer boasts more than 65 new career profiles, thanks to partner AgCareers.com, as well as three new career focus areas — sustainability, agricultural technology and skilled trades.

A new look and feel also spotlight a renovated career finder, now named "My Career Quiz," with double the questions as before. With an added focus on personal interests and updated professional preferences, such as hybrid/remote working conditions, the goal is to "really get to know the student and who they are at heart," McGrady says.

After all, AgExplorer is the students' domain. "Not all career sites are student-friendly," McGrady notes, "but this one is easy to use. Students return to this resource." She points out its "meaningful information that students understand" instead of "paragraphs of unending content." It's also engaging, with virtual field trips that give students behind-the-scenes looks at industry partners. Plus, this unique, one-stop shop now offers an even clearer connection between future career options and current FFA experience: Each job profile suggests FFA and SAE connections to help develop skills related to that role.

"We don't want AgExplorer to be a tool that is stagnant," McGrady says. "We want it to be relevant and help students find their place in agriculture." It helps achieve that whether or not students pursue one of the site's five personalized career suggestions. "Even just becoming exposed to the variety of agriculture jobs makes you a more ag-literate consumer, and that makes you a better overall consumer," McGrady adds.

"It's important to see all that's available because it makes you more informed and grows your appreciation for the industry," she says. "And that makes a more positive industry as a whole."

Visit **AgExplorer.FFA.org** to see the new features in action.

Photography: Getty Images, Cameron Prins

AG Careers

YES, THIS IS AN AG CAREER!

If you're interested in combining your creativity with the principles of science and mathematics, this unconventional career in agriculture could be for you.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

Ever wonder how your favorite foods get their delicious flavors? Whether it's a sweet treat, a spicy sauce, a bitter bite or a tart taste that makes your lips pucker, you come across distinct flavors daily, but you may not realize someone with a career in agriculture likely had a hand in creating them.

A flavor technologist — or someone who helps develop the flavors used in food and drink products — combines scientific tools and processes with creativity and imagination to enhance natural flavors, replicate existing flavors, camouflage unpleasant flavors and create entirely new flavor profiles.

Flavor technologists also work closely with food and beverage manufacturers, ensure all flavors meet regulatory and safety requirements, and establish detailed processes so flavors are consistent and easily reproduced during bulk production.

According to Veronica Hislop, a content creator and host of the "FoodGrads" podcast, an educational background in chemistry, mathematics, nutrition and food science is highly beneficial for those interested in becoming flavor technologists.

"Someone in this career will conduct flavor-development experiments, calculate precise measurements and cost per use of each ingredient, and have a thorough understanding of how different flavors complement and contrast with one another," Hislop says. "Although there isn't a particular bachelor's degree a flavor technologist must have, anything in the STEM [science, technology, engineering and mathematics] field would definitely be helpful."

Hislop also mentions that flavor technologists should have a keen sense of taste and smell, along with a strong interest in cooking and recipe development.



"A flavor technologist combines the skills of both a chef and a chemist," she says. "This career path blends art and science in a really fun way."

Dig into the details of a flavor technologist on page 18.

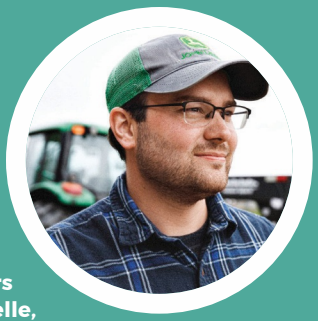
Find Your Ag Career

Yes, a flavor technologist is an ag career, and FFA corporate partners such as Kerry Group and ADM offer this job! Are you interested in other unconventional careers in agriculture? Visit AgExplorer.FFA.org.

BLUE AND GOLD MEETS GREEN AND YELLOW

Corporate alumni and supporters chapters are a unique way for companies to rally their support for the National FFA Organization.

– By Bev Flatt



Even before donning their corduroy jackets, many FFA members were building a love for agriculture by carpet farming with their favorite toy tractors. John Deere has a legacy of inspiring young people to pursue careers in agriculture. For Benjamin Zelle, it was part of the appeal of working for the global machinery company. Zelle was recently elected as the company's FFA Alumni and Supporters Chapter president and manages its National FFA Week activities.

"The biggest thing for corporate alumni chapters is to simply start," Zelle says. "It doesn't have to be a full week of hourly events. Our FFA Week participation started at our John Deere facilities by asking local chapters to come in, wear their blue jackets and hand out flyers to promote FFA Week. We teamed them up with John Deere FFA Alumni and Supporters members at various facilities, and together they would talk about the history of FFA and their local chapter, and we promoted our FFA Alumni and Supporters chapter."

> "The biggest thing for corporate alumni chapters is to simply start."
> – Benjamin Zelle

Since their first FFA Week activities, John Deere members have spread their support to include their time, talent and treasure. Their philosophy is that no matter where you are in your career, you can likely give your time and your talent. Once a year – during Give FFA Day – they ask for monetary donations. This past year, nearly 300 John Deere employees donated during Give FFA Day, and it is estimated these donations accounted for nearly 10% of all giving during the 2022 FFA Week.

Learn more about how to celebrate FFA Week at FFA.org/National-FFA-Week.

Illustration: Getty Images, Rudzhan Nagiev; courtesy of Benjamin Zelle

MAP YOUR FUTURE IN AG

– By Lauren Manning

Determining the right career path in agriculture can be difficult given the many paths available. From working in a lab developing the next generation of technology to actually using that technology on the farm, the options are nearly endless. Because some of these career paths require specific next steps, it is important to have an idea about where you are headed sooner rather than later. Here are just a few initial questions to consider when deciding on the career path that is right for you.

Do you like to work inside or outside?

INSIDE

Do you enjoy working with others or by yourself?

WITH OTHERS

Many ag-focused careers involve communications and outreach. This is a great chance to be the face of agriculture and interact with the public or handle marketing and communications for an agribusiness.

BY MYSELF

Consider a career in the sciences, such as a researcher. This can involve crop or animal science, and many other facets of food production. Some scientists work for universities while others work for agribusinesses.

Most research positions will still require some team interaction.

OUTSIDE

Do you like working with cutting-edge tech?

YES

Consider a career in the emerging field of ag tech, such as a drone operator or working for a soil health start-up. You could also be self-employed and offer tech assistance to farmers.

Tech jobs abound in the ag science field too!

NO

While it has high-tech elements, production agriculture may be a good fit for you because it allows you to be outside raising livestock and growing crops. The options are vast.

Keep Plotting Your Path

Looking for more ag job inspiration? Check out the newly updated **AgExplorer.FFA.org**.

Photography: Getty Images, Fourleaflover

From CDE to a Successful Business

This former FFA member creates innovative products to solve unique problems in agriculture.

– By Jessica Mozo

Missouri FFA alumnus Todd Banner was still in high school when he created the concept that would turn into the successful business he runs now. Banner, who lives in Ames, Iowa, used the skills he learned in FFA to launch Swamp Fox Innovations LLC, a technology company that provides solutions to everyday challenges in the equine, livestock and recreational industries.

Banner got the idea for one of his company's products more than 20 years ago when he was an FFA member in Eldon, Mo.

"I grew up on a cattle farm and showed animals at the county and state fairs," Banner says. "I always noticed problems with animals drinking water. None of them drank enough water at shows, and some wouldn't drink any at all. It's a major problem for livestock owners and can be devastating for animals."

Banner thought the problem might be the chlorine in municipal water. Along with his FFA Agricultural Sales Career Development Event (CDE) team, he created the concept of a product that could be added to water to remove chlorine so animals would drink more.

"That was my junior year, around 1996, and it was just a concept at the time," Banner says. "It was a learning experience."

Eventual Expertise

After high school, Banner got his PhD in chemistry and worked for Cargill as a scientist for two decades before starting his business.

"I was always science-centered. In college, I majored in agriculture and biochemistry, and later became a chemist and developed products," Banner says. "I started thinking about that FFA product concept 15 years later, and by then I had the technological expertise to solve the problem."

Banner created a product called Show FreshH_2O® that instantly neutralizes the chlorine and odor in municipal water. His wife, Nicole (pictured below), is an FFA alumna and does marketing for Swamp Fox.

Banner also created a product called Advanced Arena® Dust Control Fluid that reduces dust in indoor riding arenas.

"Our business develops innovative products for agriculture. We take everyday problems and develop solutions," Banner says. "Water treatment and dust control are two big ones. I'm working on a new product now that I'm excited about."

The impact FFA had on Banner's career path has proven invaluable.

"I actually manage the business like my old SAE [supervised agricultural experience] projects — I keep track of expenses and sales, create awareness for the product and teach people how to use it," he says. "I was always quiet and introverted, and FFA helped me gain self-confidence. SAE projects helped me learn how to run a small business."



As far as developing a successful new product, Banner says the key is to find unmet needs.

"Be aware of problems that exist," he says. "I had problems with my animals drinking. Is there a product you could develop to create a solution for a problem?"

"Our business develops innovative products for agriculture. We take everyday problems and develop solutions." – Todd Banner



Photography: Courtesy of Swamp Fox Innovations

AG Careers

Quiz: National FFA Week

How much do you know about the most festive week on the FFA calendar?

– By Jessica Mozo

Celebrate FFA Week by joining Give FFA Day on Thursday, Feb. 23, 2023!

National FFA Week happens Feb. 18-25, and there's no better time to celebrate the positive impact FFA has on its members and learn more about the organization. Take our quiz to test your knowledge on National FFA Week events and history.

1. What year was the first National FFA Week celebrated by chapters across the country?
2. National FFA Week is held during the same week as which U.S. president's birthday? A: Abraham Lincoln; B: Franklin D. Roosevelt; or C: George Washington
3. Before National FFA Week was established, members celebrated National FFA Day. What year did the idea of having a National FFA Day originate during national convention?
4. What day of National FFA Week is designated as Wear Blue Day, when members are encouraged to sport their FFA swag?
5. Members across the country take time to show appreciation to their ag teachers during which day of National FFA Week?
6. In keeping with the FFA motto of Living to Serve, many chapters volunteer in their communities during National FFA Week. Which day of FFA Week is known as Service and Advocacy Day?
7. FFA Alumni are celebrated on Tuesday of National FFA Week. Roughly how many FFA Alumni are there?

Answers: 1. 1948, 2. C. George Washington, 3. 1933 4. Friday, 5. Wednesday, 6. Monday, 7. 8 million

Photography: Getty Images, subjug, EyeEm

First Impressions on Paper

It's important to know how to put your FFA experiences into words when applying for a job. After all, a resume is often your first impression with a potential employer. – By Bev Flatt

When reviewing a resume, employees are looking at your past experiences and skills, but that doesn't have to be limited to your education and previous jobs. Extracurricular activities, along with those that happen in the classroom, can showcase a bevy of experiences. Here Kaci Rice, a human resources expert from Bayer Crop Science, shares her tips on how to add these experiences to your resume.

- **First, be sure to include them.** Extracurriculars are important and add value to your resume by showing leadership and commitment to potential employers.
- **As a high school student,** you can create a section on your resume titled "Leadership and Involvement" or a similar phrase. This section should be formatted similarly to your work experience, listed with bullet points and dates.
- **If you've held a leadership position in an extracurricular organization,** be sure to mention that. A leadership position within an extracurricular activity should read like a job, so include your title followed by your responsibilities in that particular role.
- **As an employer,** Rice always tells students to keep a running list of their activities throughout the year. This will help prompt your memory when writing a resume.
- **Simple things** such as volunteering at an animal shelter or picking up trash might strengthen your resume and set you apart from your competition.

Ready for a Resume?
The FFA Resume Generator can help.

COMMITTED TO CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT

Hawaii native Stevenson Ching made history in FFA. His legacy can inspire FFA members today. – By Jessica Walker Boehm

Born in 1918 on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, the late Stevenson Ching cultivated in FFA a passion for agriculture that flourished throughout his life.

Ching was a member of the Hans P. Faye FFA Chapter that began in 1935, which is when he started his freshman year at Waimea High School. He served as chapter president in 1936, and in 1937, he was elected president of the Hawaii FFA Association.

In 1938, Ching was named his chapter's "outstanding senior farmer" and appointed chapter president for the following year (a repeat), but his most exciting news was yet to come.

At the age of 19, Ching made history when he was elected the 1938-39 national FFA vice president at the 11th National FFA Convention in Kansas City, Mo.

He was the first national officer of color and he remains the only FFA member from Hawaii to serve as a national officer.

That was just the beginning of Ching's impressive career in agriculture. He and his brothers operated a nearly 200-acre ranch on Kauai that included cattle, horses, swine and chickens. In 1946, he became an egg grader and served as an inspector for the Hawaii Board of Agriculture and Forestry.

Ching went on to work for the Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA), initially as chief of the marketing and economics branch, and later as chief of the commodities branch. After retiring from the HDOA, he established a commercial orchid-growing business called S&K Orchids.

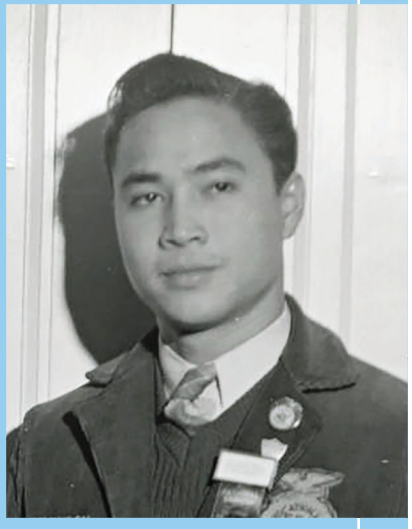
> **"Let us resolve to better our organization, just as the great patriots, pilgrims and pioneers have built America,"**
> Ching said in his vice president's report at the 12th National FFA Convention in 1939.

An Inspiration

Ching passed away in 2006 at the age of 87. His legacy endures, however, and still inspires FFA members today.

Not only did he embody the hard work, service and dedication that FFA imparts, but he also was a visionary who supported the organization's commitment to constant improvement — as well as the patience and perseverance required to see it through.

"Let us resolve to better our organization, just as the great patriots, pilgrims and pioneers have built America," Ching said in his vice president's report at the 12th National FFA Convention in 1939. Then, reflecting the famous words of American icon Helen Keller, he said, "We have plenty to do, so let us not shirk. It is well to remember the world is moved not only by the shoves of the mighty heroes, but also by the aggregate of the tiny pushes of each little honest worker."





Above right: Stevenson Ching, here in 1939, served as the national FFA vice president.

Right: Ching, front row, far left, poses with the 1938-39 National FFA Officers.

Photography: Copyright Trustees of Indiana University

AG careers

FFA prepares members for careers in agriculture and beyond. What career are you planning to pursue, and how will FFA help you get there?



Andrew Seibel

NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT

This year will allow me to brush shoulders with so many different people and opportunities. I will be able to see how I can take those passions for people and agriculture and try to create a better world around me – even after I hang up this jacket for the very last time.



Jessica Herr

NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY

I'm really hoping to use the leadership skills that I've gained through FFA – through the career and leadership development events and serving on officer teams – to hopefully work in a youth development organization similar to FFA. The dream is to work in a position where I get to encourage and inspire students in the way that I have been through FFA.



MacKenna Clifton

SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

My tentative plan is to go back to the classroom as an agriculture teacher and make sure that I'm giving students the same opportunities that I was offered. While I'm looking forward to going back to the classroom, I also know this year will open me up to a variety of opportunities and I'm excited to see where that leads.



Gracie Murphy

EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

Ultimately, I plan to pursue a career as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. I think what's really special about FFA is that it gives you so many connections. I know there are countless opportunities for internships and jobs because of the connections I have made in the blue jacket. I also hope to learn more about the industry. After all, that's what FFA provides to students.



Karstyn Cantrell

CENTRAL REGION VICE PRESIDENT

The one career development event I loved participating in more than anything else was agricultural communications. This contest equipped me with so many skills and a genuine passion. I have very high hopes that after I complete my term as a national officer, I can apply my major in agricultural communications and minor in legal studies in a career in agriculture law.



Ryan Williamson

WESTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

I hope to one day enter the sector of international agriculture or agricultural policy, and to say that National FFA has influenced me to choose this career path would be an understatement. My very first contest in FFA was the agricultural issues forum leadership development event. It ignited a passion for policy in me, and it prepared me for what could possibly be my career.

Photography: Copyright © FFA

AG 101

Class or Career ?

– By Lauren Manning

From heading straight into the workforce to pursuing a graduate degree, many postsecondary options can set you up for career success. But what's the right fit? Let's consider the options and weigh the benefits and disadvantages of each. Also, remember the FFA scholarships available for various areas of study.



PATHWAY

Graduate Degree Program

DESCRIPTION

- Obtain either a master's or doctorate degree
- Requires an undergraduate B.A. or B.S. degree

COST

$$$$

BENEFITS

- Will ensure that you become an expert in your chosen field, allowing you to work as a professor if you choose

DISADVANTAGES

- Can take nearly a decade to achieve
- Comes with many requirements, such as publishing research papers and teaching undergraduate classes
- Likely requires writing and defending a thesis before your degree is conferred

PATHWAY

Four-Year Degree Program

DESCRIPTION

- Earns you a bachelor's (B.A. or B.S.) degree in a specific field with the option to add a minor or double major

COST

$$$

BENEFITS

- Meets requirements of many employers seeking applicants who have at least an undergraduate degree
- A wide variety of areas of study

DISADVANTAGES

- Can be costly depending on which school you attend
- May end up working in a field that differs from the subject matter of your undergraduate degree

PATHWAY

Two-Year Program

DESCRIPTION

- Involves attending a two-year community college before the option of transferring to a four-year university
- Earns you an associate's degree

COST

$$

BENEFITS

- Can reduce the overall cost of tuition and expenses in pursuing a bachelor's degree

DISADVANTAGES

- May have a hard time finding your place at a four-year school after transferring
- Not all four-year programs accept credits from community colleges.

Illustration: Getty Images, Oleg Lyfar



AG careers

Go for the Scholarships!

The National FFA Foundation offers scholarships for students seeking a wide variety of higher education pathways and career goals. Only one application is required to pursue multiple scholarship opportunities totaling nearly $2 million. To learn more and apply, visit **FFA.org/scholarships.**

PATHWAY

Trade School & Apprenticeship

DESCRIPTION

• Offers learning a trade such as electrician, plumber or welder through a trade school program

COST

$$

BENEFITS

• Often far less costly than a four-year degree program
• Curriculum focuses on practical skills to prepare you for your chosen field of work.
• Earn immediate experience through apprenticeship opportunities

DISADVANTAGES

• Prepares you for only one field
• Often involves physical labor that may not be for everyone.

PATHWAY

Self-Employment

DESCRIPTION

• While being on your own has risks, it can help you build your reputation and customer base at an early stage in your career.

COST

$$

BENEFITS

• You can make your own decisions about how to structure your business, who your clients are, and whether to grow or pivot to a different direction.

DISADVANTAGES

• The buck stops with you and you are responsible for all aspects of your operation.
• Because you are in charge, you may not have as much flexibility as you'd like when emergencies pop up or planning a vacation.

PATHWAY

Family Business

DESCRIPTION

• Whether it's a farm business, a plumbing operation or something else, an established family business can offer a promising track for a career.

COST

$

BENEFITS

• You have unique insight and experience that other people joining the field may not have, which can help you get ahead.
• Family businesses also typically offer opportunities to follow a management or leadership track.

DISADVANTAGES

• Family dynamics can make it difficult to get your job done.
• Boundaries between work time and family time can be blurred.
• If there are multiple siblings in the family, you may have to share ownership.

AG Careers

THE POWER of CONNECTION

FFA BRINGS TOGETHER INDIVIDUALS OF ALL DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS — IN PRACTICE AND ONLINE.

– By Lauren Denton

Ask a majority of FFA members, past and present, about the golden thread that ties the community together and it's likely not the embroidery on their jackets — it's the connections they create.

"FFA catches you at the years when finding friendships is very important, and a great opportunity," says Phil Eberly. "In high school, I struggled to find friend groups, but when I was in FFA, I didn't have to be athletic; I didn't have to look a certain way; and I didn't need a crazy skill set to start. I could show up and continue to grow, and I found people along the way."

One of those people was Kolesen McCoy, who served alongside Eberly on the 2017-18 Ohio state FFA officer team, the experience that both started and cemented their friendship. "I'm not sure there's anything else quite like it," McCoy says. "You bring together a group of young people and challenge them with the task of collaborating with their peers and leading a large organization. It's a good challenge, and it's nice to be able to share it."

McCoy went on to serve as the 2019-20 national president and now works as strategist and managing director for agribusiness at Majority Strategies, while Eberly is pursuing a graduate degree in food science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and serving his third year as a FFA member leadership series facilitator for the National FFA Organization. Their separate paths have enriched the bond they share.

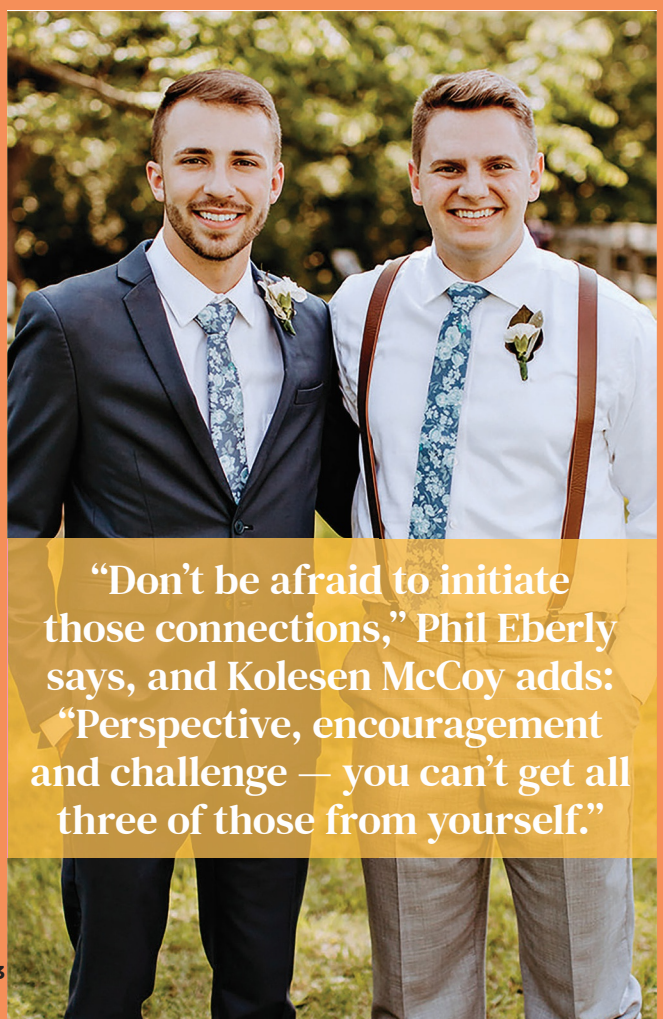
"In life, everyone is called to wear lots of different hats," Eberly says. "What's really cool being friends with Kolesen — because we have very different experiences — is having that person to go to when they have hats they are a lot better at wearing. Kolesen is really good at relationships or speeches, and I enjoy going to him when I'm called to put on those hats."

McCoy agrees. "We have very different interests, and we're tackling two different focuses within the ag industry, but we still have shared common ground," he says.

McCoy and Eberly's friendship is but one FFA success story about the power of connection, especially when forged by the unique contributions of different individuals sharing one goal. More such connections are developing each day in chapters, officer teams, leadership conferences, and online through the Forever Blue Network. The exclusive social platform casts a wide, global net for members and alumni to find mutually beneficial relationships for mentoring, career advice, industry insights and more. Hundreds of profiles flagged "willing to help" are ready to share their personal perspectives for another's gain.

"Don't be afraid to initiate those connections," Eberly says, and McCoy adds: "Perspective, encouragement and challenge — you can't get all three of those from yourself."

Connect with the worldwide FFA community at **ForeverBlueNetwork.org.**



"Don't be afraid to initiate those connections," Phil Eberly says, and Kolesen McCoy adds: "Perspective, encouragement and challenge — you can't get all three of those from yourself."

Photography: BrittLuntPhotography

Make Your Mark Through Washington Leadership Conference

Find out why WLC is a can't-miss summertime event for FFA members around the U.S.

– By Jessica Walker Boehm

For many FFA members, a summer highlight is attending Washington Leadership Conference (WLC) in Washington, D.C. — the second-largest student experience hosted by the National FFA Organization each year. It draws thousands of students from across the country.

FFA members can attend one of seven week-long WLC sessions in June and July that include interactive workshops, seminars and small-group sessions led by agriculture industry professionals, counselors and FFA staff members.

Each activity focuses on building personal strengths and developing leadership skills so students can better serve their respective chapters and communities.

WLC attendees also learn more about the history of the nation's capital, tour D.C. landmarks and have the opportunity to participate in congressional visits.

"Visiting Washington, D.C., was an important part of my WLC experience because it helped me broaden my perspective," says Judd Samples, a 2022 WLC attendee and president of the Emerson FFA in Emerson, Ark. "I realized the things I do in my community can impact not only those around me, but also people in my state, country and beyond. At WLC, we learned to do what we can, with what we have, where we are. Even if you think you don't have the resources, you can still find a way to make a difference."

Another significant aspect of the conference for many students is each week's capstone event, a hands-on civic engagement activity requiring attendees to put their newfound knowledge to work while embodying the last line of the FFA motto, "Living to Serve."

"Helping pack meals with Meals for Hope [a nonprofit organization aiming to end hunger in the U.S.] is one of my favorite WLC memories," says Virginia FFA State Vice President Jordan Petrie, who attended WLC in 2022. "My peers and I helped pack approximately 60,000 meals in about two hours. We had so much fun working together, and it showed us how much we could accomplish in a short amount of time by collaborating and combining our strengths and talents."

The impact of WLC extends to its corporate partners, too. Kathy Eichlin, head of internal communications North America crop protection for Syngenta, a longtime National FFA Organization and WLC partner, attended the conference for the first time in 2022 and walked away feeling inspired and excited about the future of agriculture and the industry's next generation of leaders.

"I was blown away by WLC – the caliber of the students who attended, the insightful questions they asked, and how engaged they were in each group session and one-on-one conversation," Eichlin says. "It was an outstanding week for me, both personally and professionally, and it made me feel even prouder to be part of this industry. I'm already looking forward to going back."

To learn more about WLC and to register to attend, visit **FFA.org/WLC.**





Emerson FFA President Judd Samples (right) and Virginia FFA Vice President Jordan Petrie (far right) attended WLC in 2022.

Photography: Courtesy of Judd Samples, Jordan Petrie

6 UNUSUAL CARE

Written By Bev Flatt
& Illustrated by Matt Wood



Zoologist

Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!

JOB SYNOPSIS

When you think about your heroes, do folks such as Charles Darwin, Jane Goodall and the Crocodile Hunter come to mind? If so, a career in zoology might be for you. A zoologist studies the behavior of animals and wildlife, the diseases and genetics of animals across the globe, and animal health and behavior.

AREAS OF STUDY

Pursuing a career in this field means you most likely need to earn a bachelor's or master's degree in zoology, biology, natural resources management or ecology. But if you want to try courses before committing to a degree, study the fundamentals of zoology in classes such as ag education, biology, anatomy and animal science. Computer and mathematics skills are also helpful.

COMMON EMPLOYERS

After completing their studies, zoologists are most often employed by zoos, aquariums, wildlife centers and parks. They can also work for conservation groups, animal pharmaceutical companies, research firms, governmental agencies, or colleges and universities.

AVERAGE SALARY

$64,000 per year

ERS IN AG

There is a job in agriculture to meet virtually every interest. We have proof!

AG Careers

Just think: One day, you could be one of those people who truly loves their job. Instead of a sitcom stereotype of employees who clock in each day, sit in their cubicles and drink stale coffee, you could earn your paycheck by working at something you deeply enjoy. Agriculture has no shortage of career options. Whether you are looking for a job where you can help other people, find your place in the business world, learn a forgotten craft or develop other talents, one of these careers could bring you exactly what you are seeking.

Restoration Specialist

There's more to fix than antiques.



JOB SYNOPSIS

Restoration is more than just a category on Pinterest. It can also be considered a career in agriculture. A restoration specialist investigates the connections between organisms and the environment. They make recommendations for improvements with the goal of reestablishing natural ecosystems.

AREAS OF STUDY

Students interested in careers like this are recommended to take high school courses in ag education, earth science, biology, plant science, chemistry, biology and mathematics. After high school, pursuing an advanced degree in biology, plant science, environmental science or natural resource management can set you up for success.

COMMON EMPLOYERS

Much of this work will include implementing your recommendations for seed companies, crop protection companies, universities, government agencies, consulting firms, research laboratories, museums, field stations, and parks and recreation areas.

AVERAGE SALARY

$43,000 per year

Flavor Technologist

It's a delicious career!



JOB SYNOPSIS

If your Starbucks order is a complex combination of milks, syrups and espresso, you might have what it takes for one of the most unusual careers in agriculture. Coffee is considered one of the most complex flavors to exist. Flavor technologists use these complexities to develop the tastes used in food and drinks. In a fusion of chemistry and kitchen know-how, they develop new formulas, run samples and manage experiments in a laboratory.

AREAS OF STUDY

High school students can get a head start in this field by taking classes in ag education, family and consumer science, mathematics, biology, chemistry and computer skills. From there, advanced degrees in food science, nutrition or chemistry further develop skills. Passing an examination with the Society of Flavor Chemists and undergoing a seven-year apprenticeship under a senior flavorist is the cherry on top.

COMMON EMPLOYERS

Professionals in these careers typically work for food companies or flavor houses that focus on producing and selling flavors to be used by the food and beverage industries.

AVERAGE SALARY

$60,000 per year

Game Warden

Are you game?

JOB SYNOPSIS

Jurassic Park is more than an award-winning, multibillion-dollar franchise. It's a story about the immense responsibility and value of game wardens. Game wardens are focused on ensuring the protection and safety of wild animals. While they often work to enforce laws related to hunting and fishing, they also create wildlife conservation programs and educate the public.

AREAS OF STUDY

Courses in ag education, natural resources, biology, earth science and mathematics lay a foundation for pursuing a career as a game warden. Earning a bachelor's degree in relevant areas such as environmental science, natural resources or wildlife management is also a great addition to an education plan.

COMMON EMPLOYERS

Game wardens are almost always employed at a state or national park, preserve and range, which gives them some of the best views in the world.

AVERAGE SALARY

$58,000 per year



Athletic Turf Manager

The grass is always greener in turf management.



JOB SYNOPSIS

Are you looking at a career that is even rarer than becoming a professional football player or golfer? It involves managing these sporting grounds. Athletic turf managers ensure the turf and surrounding areas of sporting grounds are pristine, healthy and ready for game time. They plan, oversee and manage major athletics grounds and field renovation projects, while also being responsible for tasks such as project management and budgeting.

AREAS OF STUDY

These professionals typically need a high school diploma or college degree in turf grass management, horticulture or crop science, in addition to studying courses such as ag education, mathematics, biology, chemistry and environmental science.

COMMON EMPLOYERS

They are usually employed by universities, golf courses, municipal stadiums or even professional sporting teams.

AVERAGE SALARY

$50,000 per year

MORE COOL AG CAREERS

Want to learn more about these careers or research even more ag jobs? Visit **AgExplorer.FFA.org**.

Wind Turbine Technician

A 'wind-wind' career path.



JOB SYNOPSIS

According to the U.S. Wind Turbine Database, there are more than 70,800 turbines across 44 states, Puerto Rico and Guam. Not only is that number impressive due to the massive size of these turbines, but it also means good career prospects for wind turbine technicians. Wind techs are responsible for installing new turbines as well as maintaining and repairing existing structures.

AREAS OF STUDY

An associate degree in applied sciences such as wind energy technology may meet many job requirements. However, in some cases, only a high school diploma is required if you take courses such as ag education, agricultural mechanics, environmental science, physics and computer skills. If you are in an area with a large wind turbine presence, you may be able to receive training specifically as a wind turbine technician.

COMMON EMPLOYERS

Electrical companies and cooperatives often hire wind techs. Also private energy firms focus on wind energy-producing areas. Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas have a high demand for these jobs, and the industry continues to grow.

AVERAGE SALARY

$42,000 per year



The Internship Advantage

FOR THIS FFA ALUM, A SUMMER INTERNSHIP OFFERED A CLEAR PATH TO A FUTURE CAREER.

- By Jodi Helmer

From the time Austin Bagby joined FFA in middle school, he knew he wanted to pursue a career in agriculture.

"Growing up, my grandfather had a dairy farm and I helped with the cows," Bagby says. "It was my biggest interest and something I knew I wanted to do."

Bagby participated in a dairy production supervised agricultural experience (SAE), increasing his herd from two heifers to 35 and leasing cows to other members of his Bell High FFA in Bell, Fla., to encourage them to learn about dairy production.

"While I was in FFA, it became more difficult for family and small dairies to cope with the increased costs of dairying. With this economic change, these smaller dairies retired their herds, leaving fewer dairies in the area that now rely on economies of scale," Bagby says. "By leasing my cattle to those interested FFA members, they got the experience of learning about the industry and getting to show cattle and have their own dairy production SAE for FFA."

As a high school freshman, Bagby started a separate SAE to learn more about the impact of nitrogen leaching on agricultural production, and the impact of humates and humic acid in the soil. He expanded the scope of the project several times, moving from potted plants to field trials to prove the benefit.

"Environmental problems take a big toll on farmers," he says.

> **"The biggest benefit for me was getting out there and getting out of my comfort zone and trying something new."**
>
> **- AUSTIN BAGBY**

Bagby, now a senior majoring in agriculture studies at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, got to use some of those skills during a summer internship with Syngenta.

In the summer of 2022, Bagby spent three months traveling to citrus groves around Florida to test the soil for phytophthora, a disease that causes root and stem rot and can kill trees. He also worked alongside sales representatives who returned to the farms to talk to growers about the results of the soil tests and, if phytophthora was present, to recommend Syngenta products that could treat the disease.

"My favorite part was the independent nature of the work; I was responsible for my own work," he says. "It prepared me to be ready to go into a career when I graduate from college."

The internship also helped Bagby better understand the myriad opportunities for careers in agriculture. Based on the internship experience, he plans to pursue a career in agricultural sales after his 2023 graduation — a path he'd never considered before working for Syngenta.

"The biggest benefit for me was getting out there and getting out of my comfort zone and trying something new," he says. "I found out, 'Wow, this is really cool.' Maybe getting to do it for a career. FFA has opened up so many opportunities in my life."

INTERESTED IN AN INTERNSHIP?
Many internships can be found on the Forever Blue Network. Find your fit at ForeverBlueNetwork.org.

Photography: Courtesy of Austin Bagby

MINTED A FARMER

HOW AN AMERICAN FFA DEGREE RECIPIENT WITH LITTLE AG BACKGROUND FORGED A SUCCESSFUL SAE AND CAREER IN THE FIELD.

- By Lauren Denton



Brock Ashley's mint harvesting and oil extraction SAE won him the 2021 Wisconsin FFA Fiber and Oil Crop Production Proficiency Award.



Ashley's commitment to the task at hand has led the way to more responsibilities and opportunities at Gumz Farms.

Photography: Courtesy of Brock Ashley

Brock Ashley didn't grow up on a farm, but he found his place – or rather, agricultural placement – on one. In 2017, at the end of his freshman year, he joined a morning farmhand program for high school students at Gumz Farms in Endeavor, Wis., and with the exception of a semester at college in fall 2021, he has been there since.

"I knew I wanted to do something in ag, and that was the closest opportunity that worked for me," Ashley says. "My parents just had to drop me off at school, and the bus took us there."

While Gumz is a 6,000-acre diversified-crop farm "with something different to do every day," the former Portage FFA president carved his niche among the specialty crop mint. His harvesting and oil extraction supervised agricultural experience (SAE) won him the 2021 Wisconsin FFA Fiber and Oil Crop Production Proficiency Award and the spot as Wisconsin's finalist for the 2022 American Star in Agricultural Placement.

"I was really shocked [by the accolades]," Ashley says. "A lot of other kids have been working their farm jobs their entire lives, and I thought I was a nobody."

Clearly not. So how did Ashley, who professes he "paved his own way in ag," steer himself to a standout SAE? First, he points to FFA, which he joined in middle school. "My aunt was an FFA advisor at another high school, so I always joked that I didn't have a choice," he adds. He credits her and his other advisors, which includes his cousin, for pushing him to submit his SAE.

He also acknowledges that FFA "prepared me for what to expect" and introduced him to industry connections, which opened the doors for conversations. "Don't be afraid to talk to people about what you're interested in," he advises. "A lot of farmers want to see young people get involved. My employer was always really interested in my FFA journey and growth."

Ashley also had a willingness to learn. "I couldn't have worked my way up without it," he says. "It may mean picking rocks for about a year or so, but everybody's got to pick rocks."

Ashley's commitment to the task at hand – whether it was clearing fields, harvesting mint, learning to drive tractors or changing tires in the shop during the winter – has led the way to more responsibilities and opportunities at Gumz Farms. The latest, working in the agronomy department and experiencing seed sales, has sparked his interest for the future, where the field remains wide open.

"I don't really plan on finding a different career," he says.

To learn about other SAEs and get inspiration for your own, visit SAEForAll.org.

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Official Dress & Jackets



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1.	MEN'S OFFICIAL JACKET (STANDARD)	100	$60.00
	WOMEN'S OFFICIAL JACKET (STANDARD)	103	$60.00
	Tailored jackets available		
2.	PATTERN FFA TIE	404	$16.00
	EMBROIDERED FFA TIE	403	$16.00
	STRIPED SILK TIE	405SILK	$25.00
3.	PATTERN FFA WATERFALL SCARF	GS4	$13.00
	EMBROIDERED WATERFALL FFA SCARF	GS3	$13.00
	STRIPED WATERFALL SCARF	GS2	$13.00
	EMBROIDERED FFA SCARF WITH RING	GS1	$13.00
4.	DEGREE CHAIN	KC	$8.00-$10.50
	15" and 20" lengths available, degree keys not included		



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5. MEN'S EMBLEM COOL-TEK POLO (S-5X) 03422 $38.00
WOMEN'S EMBLEM COOL-TEK POLO (XS-3X) 03423 $38.00

6. MEN'S L/S FISHING SHIRT (S-4X) 03424 $45.00
WOMEN'S L/S FISHING SHIRT (XS-3X) 03245 $45.00

POLOS & WOVENS



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7. MEN'S CT COLORBLOCK FFA POLO (S-4X) 01707 $38.00
WOMEN'S CT COLORBLOCK FFA POLO (XS-3X) 01708 $38.00

8. MEN'S CT COLORBLOCK EMBLEM POLO (S-4X) 01709 $38.00
WOMEN'S CT COLORBLOCK EMBLEM POLO (XS-3X) 01710 $38.00

9. MEN'S TWILL EMBLEM SHIRT (S-4X) 03208 $40.00
WOMEN'S TWILL EMBLEM SHIRT (XS-3X) 03210 $40.00

10. MEN'S LETTERMARK COOL-TEK POLO (S-5X) 03130 $38.00
WOMEN'S LETTERMARK COOL-TEK POLO (XS-3X) 03131 $38.00

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FFA Emblem
LOGO GEAR



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1.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR TEE (S-2X)	03387-60	$16.00
2.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR TEE (S-2X)	03387-03	$16.00
3.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR TEE (S-2X)	03387-40	$16.00
4.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR TEE (S-2X)	03387-46	$16.00
5.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR HOODIE (S-2X)	03388-03	$35.00
6.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR HOODIE (S-2X)	03388-40	$35.00
7.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR HOODIE (S-2X)	03388-46	$35.00
8.	FFA EMBLEM LOGO GEAR HOODIE (S-2X)	03388-60	$35.00



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BOLD LOGO GEAR

9.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR TEE** (S-3X)	03186-06	$16.00
10.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR TEE** (S-2X)	03186-47	$16.00
11.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR HOODIE** (S-2X)	03187-40	$35.00
12.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR HOODIE** (S-3X)	03187-64	$35.00
13.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR TEE** (S-2X)	03186-42	$16.00
14.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR HOODIE** (S-3X)	03187-06	$35.00
15.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR TEE** (S-2X)	03186-40	$16.00.
16.	**BOLD LOGO GEAR TEE** (S-3X)	03186-64	$16.00
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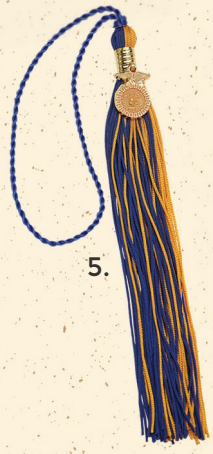
Celebrating
THE CLASS OF 2023

















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3.	DOUBLE GRADUATION CORD	00463	$15.50
4.	TWISTED GRADUATION CORD	00464	$12.50
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6.	GRADUATION MEDALLION	02224*	$10.00
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9.	**FFA SENIOR TEE** (S-3X)	02212	$18.00
10.	**FFA SENIOR STICKER**	03320	$3.00
11.	**2023 TEE** (S-3X)	03343	$18.00
12.	**LASERABLE STAINLESS TUMBLER** (20 oz)	03038*	$25.00
13.	**MV SPORT EMBLEM BLANKET**	00123-40*	$45.00
14.	**FFA GRAD THANK YOU CARDS** (Pkg. 12)	02911	$10.00
15.	**WALNUT KEEPSAKE BOX**	01020*	$55.00
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*Personalization available

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FRONT

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4. BRIGHT FUTURES PENNANT TEE (S-2X) 03335 $22.00
5. FFA CORDUROY CREW (S-2X) 03360 $30.00

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HATS OFF TO YOU!



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6.	PROMO SLIDE CAP	03112-07	$14.00
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9.	REALTREE AMERICANA SLIDE CAP	03236	$20.00

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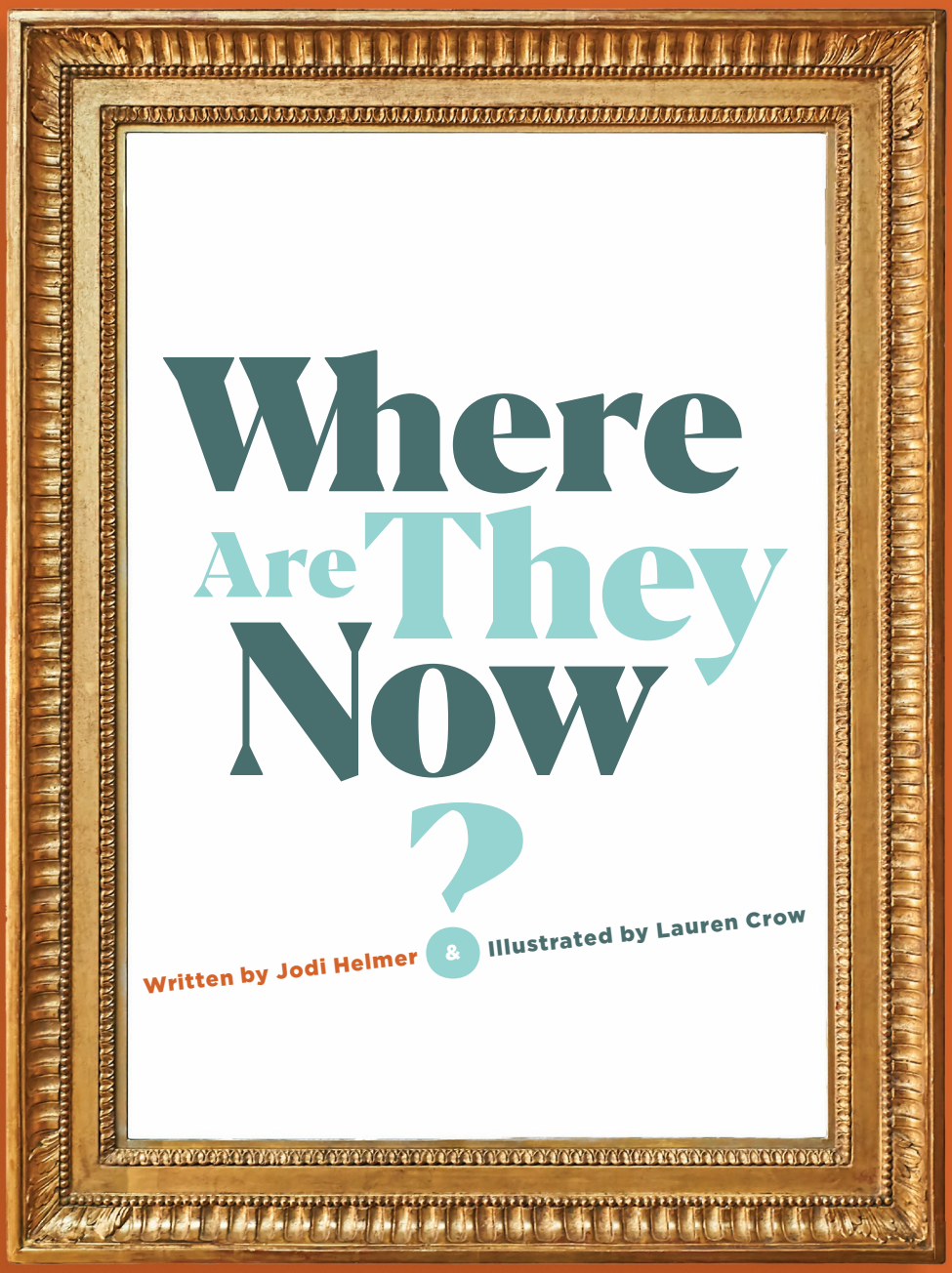
AG Careers



FIVE PAST NATIONAL OFFICERS SHARE HOW FFA PREPARED THEM FOR CAREER SUCCESS.

Agricultural education is about more than agriculture. Through classes, career and leadership development events and supervised agricultural experiences, national conventions and industry visits, FFA members gain experiences in science, business, technology, leadership and public speaking.

The skills and experiences developed through FFA prepare members for a wide range of careers, including farming, agribusiness, education, aerospace, health care and politics.

Meet five past national officers who pursued different career paths but have one thing in common: FFA prepared them for success.

DESHAWN L. BLANDING

LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DeShawn L. Blanding grew up in Manning, S.C., a rural community where his family has lived since enslavement. His grandfather was a third-generation farmer who struggled to access credit and government programs, and Blanding realized there were few people in Washington, D.C., devoted to fighting for rural communities of color.

"As a 2016-17 national FFA officer, I was drawn to advocacy as we spent a third of our year as champions for agriculture and ag education," he says. "I decided to bring our voices to the table and work to remove systemic barriers and increase access to resources."

The Manning FFA alumnus graduated from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University with a degree in agriculture and environmental systems, and he earned a master's degree in public policy from George Washington University. In 2020, Blanding began his career in advocacy.

In his current role as a legislative assistant with the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture, Blanding advises the chairperson, plans public hearings, drafts new legislation and monitors the progress of current federal programs and policies. The skills he learned in FFA, including building authentic relationships, becoming an effective communicator and living to serve, have been key in his career.



"A large part of our job is to understand the issues of constituents, farmers, consumers and rural communities by meeting with advocates," he says. "My job allows me to think creatively about how we make our society better, and I get to make a difference in the lives of others by hearing their needs and thinking of new policy ideas to improve their situation."

"My job allows me to think creatively about how we make our society better, and I get to make a difference in the lives of others by hearing their needs and thinking of new policy ideas to improve their situation."

Photography: Getty Images, Tomekbudujedomek, rafal olechowski

ABBEY GRETSCH

TERRITORY MANAGER, CORTEVA AGRISCIENCE

Abbey Gretsch competed in the agricultural communications career development event as a member of Athens Christian FFA in Georgia, and she loved the idea of interacting with farmers and being the voice of agriculture.

It wasn't until she visited the University of Georgia booth at the National FFA Convention & Expo that Gretsch learned it was possible to major in agricultural communications — and it proved to be the perfect fit.

"Once I got into my classes at UGA, I realized there were a variety of things I could do from graphic design to news articles," she recalls.

The major took Gretsch in a different direction. She completed an internship in the marketing department of the turf and ornamental division at Corteva Agriscience and accepted a full-time role in sales for the urban pest division.



Gretsch first learned about Corteva Agriscience through FFA. In addition to recognizing its name as a corporate partner, Gretsch visited the international agriscience company on an industry tour when she served as a 2015-16 national officer.

"Corteva is a huge agriculture company and its culture is one of a kind," she says.

Gretsch has lived and worked in Nashville, Tenn., and Statham, Ga., developing advertising strategies, and digital, text and email campaigns for pest control companies. Her background in agricultural communications ensures that messaging is effective, and the public-speaking skills she gained in FFA help with customer interactions.

"I love the interactions with customers, and feel like I get to be boots on the ground to help them on a local level," she says. "FFA 1,000 percent prepared me for this role."

Her background in agricultural communications ensures that messaging is effective, and the public-speaking skills she gained in FFA help with customer interactions.

Photography: Getty Images, Tomekbudujedomek

“I knew I loved education and wanted to be engaged in agriculture.”



GRACIE FURNISH REYNOLDS

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION TEACHER AND FFA ADVISOR

Gracie Furnish Reynolds grew up in a family of educators. Her mom, grandmother and great-grandmother were all teachers, and Reynolds knew she wanted to follow in their footsteps.

“I knew I loved education and wanted to be engaged in agriculture,” she says. “Agricultural education had such a huge impact on my life.”

Reynolds served as a 2017-18 national officer. After graduating from the University of Kentucky with a degree in agricultural education, she moved to Clinton, Ky., where her husband, Jonathan, farms with his grandfather.

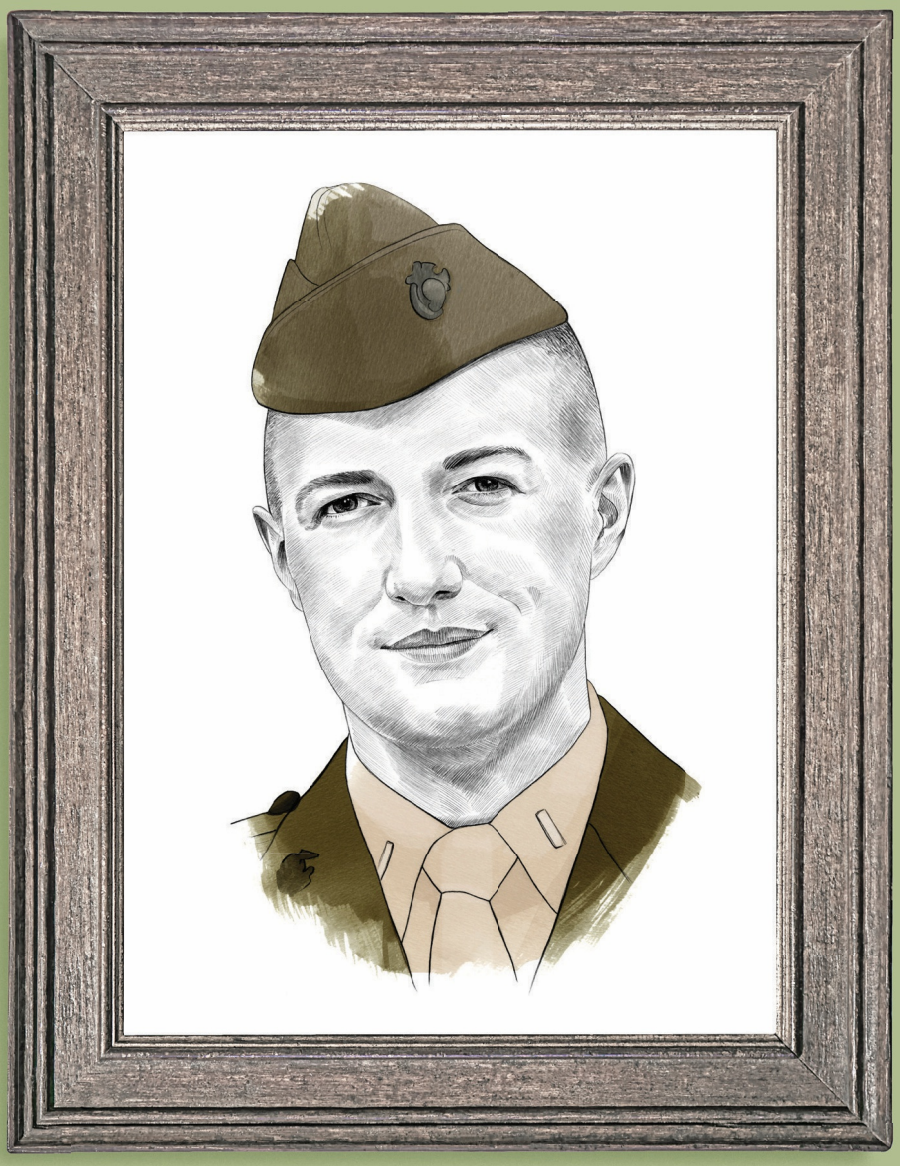
Reynolds works as an agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor at Hickman County High School. It’s a single-teacher program in a rural community that requires Reynolds to teach six classes to approximately 120 students.

“I have great students who are excited to learn and have a passion for FFA,” she says. “One of the challenges is teaching subjects I don’t have as much experience in, but the cool thing is being able to learn things alongside my students.”

In addition to teaching agricultural education, Reynolds is pursuing a master’s degree in general agriculture at Murray State University.

Though Reynolds grew up in Kentucky, she’s new to the Clinton community. FFA gave her the tools she needed to feel at home.

“From FFA, I learned how to hop in really quickly to situations where I didn’t know anybody and be able to make connections,” she says. “Being in national office taught me that even when it’s challenging, it’s worth it.”



"The values of the United States Marine Corps are honor, courage and commitment, and those are some of the core principles that were instilled in me while growing up on a farm and participating in FFA."

RIDGE HUGHBANKS

LAW STUDENT AND SECOND LIEUTENANT IN THE U.S. MARINE CORPS

Fifth-generation farmer and rancher Ridge Hughbanks went on his first wheat harvest at 6 months old, riding in the combine with his father across their fields near Alva, Okla.

"Agriculture was always my first love," he says.

When Hughbanks joined the Alva FFA, he also discovered a passion for service. He served as a chapter officer, state president and central region vice president on the 2018-19 national officer team. He graduated from Oklahoma State University with a degree in agribusiness with a prelaw emphasis in 2021.

While researching potential career paths, Hughbanks explored opportunities that combined his interests in agriculture and service. Attending law school to serve as a judge advocate general (JAG) attorney in the U.S. Marine Corps proved to be the right choice.

"I have a deeply held desire to better serve my community and my country," he says.

Hughbanks is a second-year law student at the Washington University School of Law in St. Louis. In August, he completed Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Va., and earned his commission. Currently a second lieutenant, he will commence active-duty service following his graduation in 2024. This career path requires long days of studying and intense physical training, but he believes it's worth it.

"The values of the United States Marine Corps are honor, courage and commitment, and those are some of the core principles that were instilled in me while growing up on a farm and participating in FFA," he says. "I've been fortunate to find a career where so many of my passions and interests intersect."

Photography: Getty Images, Tomekbudujedomek, Issarawat Tattong

ABRAH MEYER

PROJECT MANAGER, JOHN DEERE

Abrah Meyer grew up on a farm in Readlyn, Iowa, but it wasn't until she started taking agricultural education classes and joined the Wapsie Valley FFA that she started thinking about agriculture as a potential career field.

"Those classes made me appreciate what my dad did on the farm," she says. "It encouraged me to go into the agriculture industry."

Meyer majored in agriculture business at Iowa State University; she added a second major in supply chain management after hearing several companies talking about their supply chain departments during industry visits when she was a 2015-16 national officer.

"Supply chain is about getting things to the right place at the right time as fast as possible and at the lowest cost possible," she says. "Supply chain is the key to getting food from the farm to the consumer."

She completed internships at Monsanto, Archer-Daniels-Midland and Kellogg — all thanks to FFA connections — and joined John Deere as a supply management specialist after her 2019 graduation.

Meyer moved into her current position as a project manager in production and precision agriculture in the Olathe, Kan., office in 2022. Her role includes go-to-market launch planning and managing key bulleting communications to John Deere field teams and dealers. She credits her FFA experience with helping her achieve career success.

In addition to teaching Meyer to consider different audiences when delivering her message — something she does in her current role with John Deere — serving in leadership positions within FFA, including national office, taught her to lead with confidence.

"FFA has been a huge catalyst for me," she says.



Meyer majored in agriculture business at Iowa State University; she added a second major in supply chain management after hearing several companies talking about their supply chain departments during industry visits when she was a 2015-16 national officer.



FUNDING THE FUTURE

BY COURTNEY LEEPER GIRGIS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BOB STEFKO

When Warrenton FFA faced major budget cuts in 2020, its community stepped up in support of agricultural education. Today, the chapter thrives by giving back.

Mary Schleuter was in science class when she first heard the rumblings.

Students came to the senior Warrenton FFA member asking, "Is it true they're shutting down the ag program?" Schleuter just brushed it off. Surely that could not be happening, the chapter parliamentarian thought, but she texted the chapter president, Dawn Sherman, and other officers to see if they had heard the same rumors. They had.

Two days later, Missouri's Warren County R-III School Board posted its agenda for a special session to be held Nov. 18, 2020. The focus was discussion on $1 million in budget cuts across the district.

One of the two Warrenton FFA advisors was on the chopping block. In effect, so were the agricultural construction classes, an agricultural business leadership and communication course and the entire middle school program, which at the time enrolled 92 students.

Growing Support

Sherman, who was serving on the Area V FFA officer team in addition to her role as chapter president, recalls the look of panic in the faces of freshmen and sophomores.

Students were finally back in school after the COVID-19 pandemic shut down activities at the end of spring 2020, and underclassmen, especially, were pumped for all the opportunities older FFA members had told them were coming — even if they had to wear masks and follow precautionary rules.



This photo: Former Warrenton FFA President Dawn Sherman proudly shows her blue-and-gold jacket at Warrenton High School. Below (left to right): A trailer built by Warrenton High School metal fabrication students; DowntownWarrenton, Mo.; Teresa Lee, Warrenton FFA alumni treasurer.







Now they were asking questions such as, "Am I only going to have one year of FFA?"

"We were just trying to make FFA normal again, and then, bam, this happened," Sherman says. "It was a stressful time. I was trying to find as much information as I could to relay what was happening and give them the facts, which was hard because there were a lot of emotions in it and none of us knew what was happening."

Warrenton FFA Alumni and Supporters, many of whom are parents of active members, were also hearing the news. Schleuter started a Change.org petition that gained nearly 8,000 signatures in a few days and, with alumni support, the students started a social media campaign using the hashtag #WarrentonAgImpact to raise awareness for the situation in their small (8,388 people in 2020) but expanding community on the outskirts of the St. Louis suburbs.

Alumni and community leaders also wrote emails to board members.

They wanted to help the school board realize "how important agriculture is to our community and to our students, and how important it was to keep the ag program intact," Warrenton FFA Alumni Treasurer Teresa Lee says.

The Decision

The meeting had to be moved to a different location to accommodate the number of community members



Former Warrenton FFA chapter officer Mary Schleuter advocated to the school board to keep the Warrenton agricultural education program intact.



Warrenton FFA advisor Diane Miederhoff also maintains the school's greenhouse.



Warrenton FFA alumni President Denise Dent takes a break at her hair salon.

anticipated to attend the night the school board was slated to make a final decision. Among them, Schleuter says, was a sea of blue FFA jackets.

Schleuter and Sherman were selected to speak on behalf of the FFA members. They had done their research and brought facts to the conversation: Agriculture represented about 35% of Warrenton's economy, and agricultural fabrication — supported by the courses specifically being cut — made up 45%.

Their speeches captivated the audience in a way that "grown adults over the age of 40 could not have," says Diane Miederhoff who serves with Dan Burkemper as a Warrenton FFA advisor.

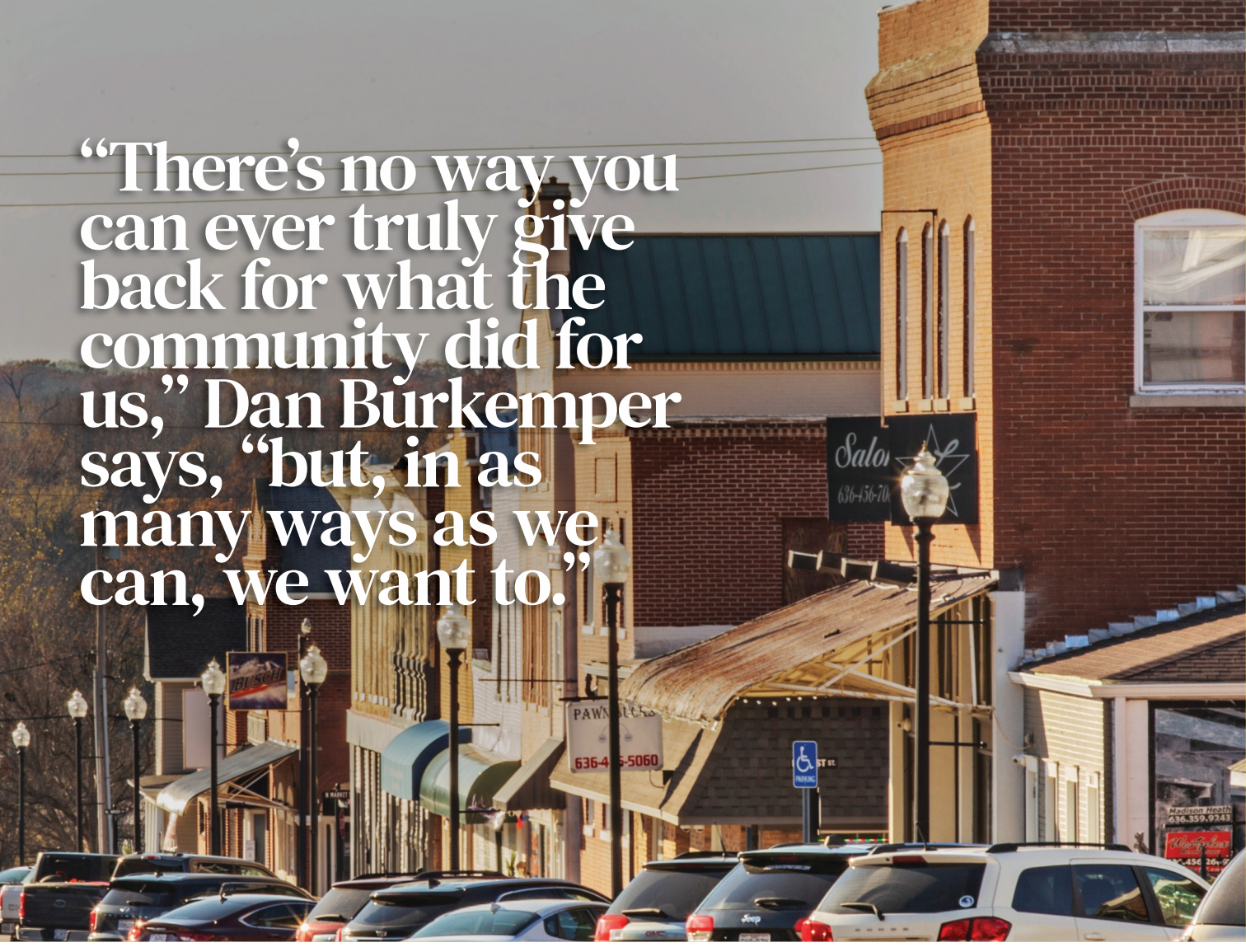
However, the board had to make cuts. With a 6-to-1 vote, Warrenton FFA lost half its program.

Sherman says the FFA advisors and officers tried to remain positive throughout the process.

"We told each other, 'We're going to try our best [to keep our full program], but if we can't do it, we're going to make this year the best year possible,'" Sherman says.

Above all, they would represent themselves with integrity, even in a difficult time.

But alumni members were not satisfied. They could not accept the decision without doing more, so a group got together and proposed that the community fund the second ag teacher. Group members took their proposal



"There's no way you can ever truly give back for what the community did for us," Dan Burkemper says, "but, in as many ways as we can, we want to."









to the superintendent, and at a December 2020 meeting the school board agreed. The community had until April 1, 2021, to raise $78,000.

A Night to Remember

The Warrenton FFA Alumni and Supporters have been around for decades. The group has not always been very active, Lee says, but alumni members were always willing to raise funds to help chapter members with trips, FFA Official Dress and college or trade school scholarships.

Now they were fired up.

The group, led by Denise Dent, alumni group president, at one point met weekly on Lee's farm to discuss plans and progress. Their numbers increased over time.

In coordination with the FFA chapter, the alumni tried everything they could think of to raise money, from selling T-shirts to hosting a trapshooting event. In total, the community raised more than $78,000, which was enough to fully fund the agriculture department.

"There were lots of tears," Sherman says. "We just realized how much our community cares for us, how much they see the impact that ag classes had on them, and how much they wanted to continue it for us and future generations."

Giving Back

Since 2020, the Warrenton agriculture department has seen steady increases in student enrollment. Miederhoff does not anticipate future funding

Advice for FFA Chapters in Jeopardy

After nearly losing an agriculture teacher and programming, Warrenton FFA advisors and alumni recommend building relationships with school administration and the community before issues arise. One way to prevent problems is to advocate now for agricultural education and the value it brings to the community.

If you do encounter a difficult situation with the school board, Warrenton FFA suggests the following tips.

• Understand the board's position. Crack down on rumors and negative talk. Model outstanding citizenship as FFA members, and realize you are responsible for bringing good to your community, not harm.

• Focus on coming together as a community. There is strength in numbers.

• Find the facts, not just the feelings, of the situation. Both are important in the conversation.

• Consider applying for an alumni grant, such as those sponsored by Tractor Supply Co. and Nutrien Ag Solutions, that can help with a variety of financial needs. Visit FFA.org/alumnigrants.

• Stay positive, respectful and flexible.

• Recognize you may not always get the outcome you want, even after doing everything you can. Don't take it personally. Just do your best.



Opposite, bottom (left to right): Warrenton FFA advisor Dan Burkemper teaches metal fabrication; Warrenton has a proud FFA history; FFA members aren't afraid of hard work; Members packaged more than 10,000 meals for Meals of Hope. This photo: Metal fabrication students constructed single-axle trailers .

concerns, but the alumni group continues to receive donations from people wanting to support FFA.

Additional donations from community members helped create a metal fabrication class and purchase supplies to build five single-axle trailers, the first of which received grand champion in its division at the Missouri State Fair. The goal is to auction trailers to buy supplies for future projects.

More support helped create a Meals of Hope program, in which students packed more than 10,000 meals for community members in need. This year, the chapter plans to expand Meals of Hope and continue serving Warrenton and surrounding areas with traditional activities such as food drives and trash pickup days.

"There's no way you can ever truly give back for what the community did for us," Burkemper says, "but, in as many ways as we can, we want to."

AG Careers

[CAREER SUCCESS]

LEADING THE CHANGE

The first female African-American recipient of the American FFA Degree pursues a successful career with USDA. - By Jessica Mozo

College Station, Texas, FFA alumna Benita Hodge clearly remembers walking across the stage at the 2003 National FFA Convention & Expo to receive her American FFA Degree. She didn't know she was making history.

"I had no idea I was the first African-American female to receive the American FFA Degree; it was not even a thought in my mind," Hodge says. "Once I learned I was the first, I was quite shocked. I wondered why no one like me had ever taken this journey."

Then Hodge acknowledged that many had indeed. In 1965, 38 years before Hodge was awarded the highest FFA degree, African Americans were first allowed to join the National FFA Organization. Women could not be official members until 1969.

"They paved the way and afforded me the opportunity to be the first African-American female in FFA to be awarded the American FFA Degree," Hodge says. "It made a positive impact in my life and made me want to share my experiences and encourage others."

Hodge's involvement with FFA exposed her to many different careers in agriculture. She later earned her bachelor's degree in agriculture science from Prairie View A&M University in Texas. Hodge launched her career as an intern with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service in Lubbock, Texas.



Benita Hodge poses with her father's ag teacher, CJ Hagler, who was inducted into the Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas Hall of Fame.

A PUBLIC SERVANT

"My first job was with USDA in 2002, and I am still working with USDA today," she says. "I began my career with the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service in Des Moines, Iowa, where I served as the national livestock slaughter statistician. After a few years, I relocated to East Lansing, Mich., to gain more experience in other sectors of the agency."

A few years later, Hodge was happy to return home to the Southern Plains Region of Texas, where she worked as an agricultural survey statistician, GIS specialist and coordinator for the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. In that position, she worked with about 200 employees across all 254 Texas counties.

Today, Hodge serves as a national survey administrator for the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) in Washington, D.C.

"We are known as the fact finders of U.S. agriculture," she explains. "The purpose of this position is to plan, coordinate and direct the data collection and conduct of large-scale and complex commodity surveys of national scope. The USDA NASS conducts hundreds of surveys annually and prepares reports covering almost every aspect of agriculture."

NASS also conducts the Census of Agriculture every five years, with the most recent census being undertaken for the 2022 production year.

"If I could pick one word to describe my position, it would be impactful," Hodge says. "It's impactful because the importance of obtaining accurate data and information helps in making informed decisions."

Hodge gives back to FFA by participating and speaking at events to encourage students, teachers and stakeholders, especially those underrepresented in the organization.

"There is always a higher height to climb," she says. "What I learned in FFA is very applicable to me today, and each experience led me to where I am today. I live by our FFA motto — Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve. I thank God I am a proud product of FFA, and I am honored to be a public servant in U.S. agriculture."

Photography: Courtesy of Benita Hodge

The View From A First-Generation Farm

How an Indiana farmer started his own operation — and what he's learned from it.

– By Lauren Denton

Cody Otten has only one regret about farming full-time: "I wish I'd done this all sooner."

The 2014 McCutcheon FFA alumnus from Indiana started his own farming operation — soon to be officially named Otten Family Farms — in 2022 after dreaming about it his whole life.

"I always wanted to farm, but I never thought I'd have the opportunity," Otten says. Growing up, his family owned farmland that was mainly rented out to produce cattle and hay. Otten didn't have experience with cash crops. "I used to ride across the street and watch the farmer who now helps me out," he says.

Today, Otten watches over his own 80 acres in Clarks Hill, Ind., and smiles every time he thinks about being a farmer. While the effort has not been easy (or cheap), it has all been worth it, he says. Here are the key lessons he's learned.

SEEK EXPERTISE AND SUPPORT. Otten first ran his farm idea by his neighbor, a farmer with decades of experience, who affirmed him with a resounding yes. From there, he chose Farm Credit for lending, primarily because of a beginning farmers program through which he'll receive two years of training alongside other young farmers. Otten says that was a key decision: "The number one thing I'd tell others is to get involved with a financial institution that will help you get set up," not simply provide funding.

He also researches continuously and listens to the local farmers who have been harvesting similar land for generations. They've formed a cooperative: Otten teaches them new technology, while they share old-school techniques that help bolster his agricultural knowledge.

START SMALL AND MAKE A PLAN TO GROW. For the first year, Otten grew only soybeans on an 80-acre plot he originally rented from his dad, but bought in September 2022. Sticking to one crop and using leased equipment helped minimize inputs and the learning curve. He plans to master two crops before getting more land. He's already set his long-term goals: In 10 years, he hopes to farm around 1,000 acres, own his own equipment and possibly be a seed rep. Ultimately, "I would love another generation to take it over," he says.

KEEP GOOD RECORDS AND WATCH YOUR CASH FLOW. Otten laughs that he never imagined spending so much time with spreadsheets, but up-to-date, accurate record keeping is critical for maintaining the cash flow that helps maintain a farm.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND GO FOR IT. "That advice may be a little overshot, but this is something I thought would be impossible," he says. "If you have a gut feeling, go after it and stay positive. Life's too short."



Cody Otten, pictured here as a member of the Mccutcheon FFA in Indiana, dreamed about owning a farm his entire life.

Photography: Courtesy of Cody Otten

ON THE RECORD: CHUCK BENSON

The BASF market intelligence manager has called on his FFA experiences, including his SAEs, in every job he's held.

– By Mark Moore

Congratulations to BASF and Benson for being named the 2022 Outstanding Corporate FFA Alumni and Supporters Chapter!

Chuck Benson, a DeKalb, Ill., native, says FFA ignited a passion in him for agriculture, which led to a successful career at BASF.



"Hold on to your goals loosely but hold on to your passions tightly."

– CHUCK BENSON

Chuck Benson, an Illinois FFA alum who served as that state's FFA president in the 1980s, spends his days as senior manager of marketing at BASF communicating about the complex and exciting world of agriculture. He attributes his ability to understand agriculture industry trends and translate them into stories that help BASF better serve its customers in part to his FFA experiences.

Q: Tell us a little about your background?

A: I grew up outside DeKalb, Ill., and worked in various ag jobs including detasseling corn, a hog farm, chicken farm and baling hay. I majored in ag economics at the University of Illinois.

Q: You've held a variety of roles at BASF. Can you describe your career path?

A: My first role was in field sales in Minnesota. I worked in several positions and states before shifting to the corporate office about 25 years ago and have spent most of my career focused on market intelligence and strategy.

Q: What are some of the challenges of your job?

A: Uncertainty and pace. A key portion of my job is to understand the ag market, so the level of volatility does not make it easy. Layer on top of that the speed at which change is occurring. It is difficult to understand what is going to happen this year, let alone three to five years from now. The complexity of agriculture has increased exponentially. But that challenge is rewarding because I am a part of agriculture's growth.

Q: How did FFA help you prepare for your career?

A: FFA ignited a passion in me for agriculture. Teachers challenged me to take on new responsibilities and leadership positions, eventually leading to a role as a state FFA officer. That experience opened my eyes to all the incredible opportunities in agriculture. I wanted a career that would allow me to learn about agriculture across the United States.

FFA also helped me gain confidence in speaking to large groups and my SAEs [supervised agricultural experiences] gave me the skills to take ownership of a project.

My FFA experience translates directly to every position I've held. I take ownership of a project, I deliver messages to diverse audiences and I adapt to changes. Thirty years later, I have spent time in Florida sugarcane fields, Pacific Northwest wheat fields and California pistachio orchards. For a kid who only saw corn and soybeans growing up, it has been an incredible ride.

Q: What advice would you give current FFA members who are looking to set out on a career path like yours?

A: Hold on to your goals loosely but hold on to your passions tightly. While my career path has shifted and changed, I have always been able to promote and share the stories about agriculture.

Photography: Courtesy of Chuck Benson; Getty Images, Andriy Onufriyenko

FFA in the USA

National FFA has state associations in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Read on for the exciting things FFA members and chapters are doing in communities across the country.

— Compiled by Julie Woodard

Alabama

It's the battle of the butts! Albertville FFA will host a Boston butt pork shoulder cook-off this spring. Community members will judge and the plates will be sold as a fundraiser.

Alaska

Members of Midnight Sun FFA teach younger students the importance of local resources by showing them how to plant, grow and care for birch seedlings.

Arizona

The Monument Valley FFA runs a veterinary clinic at its school, allowing students to get hands-on experience. The chapter is currently filming a TV show about it.



Arkansas

In July, Arkansas hosts the Chapter Presidents Conference, where chapter presidents and vice presidents learn how to become better leaders for their chapters.

California

To combat hunger, Firebaugh FFA teaches its community how to raise chickens for egg production in their backyards. The chapter also provides eggs to local churches as a source of protein.

Colorado

Brighton FFA partners with its school's Sunshine Club to create floral arrangements, name plaques and other items for students and staff. The club works with individuals who need a little extra light in their lives after a family or personal tragedy or celebration.

Connecticut

Mattabeset FFA has created the FFA Animal Ambassadors program. Teams of students, along with their registered pet partners, provide animal-assisted therapy visits.

Delaware

To wrap up the state fair, chapters are invited to compete in the FFA Fair Games — relay races where the final winner earns the best prize: a spirit stick and ultimate bragging rights!

Florida

Ocoee FFA built a sensory garden for those in Exceptional Student Education and others in its high school. The chapter implemented native Florida plants, butterfly-loving plants and other aromatic plants to appeal to all senses and attract wildlife.

Georgia

Five FFA members participated in the Legislative Livestock Show at the 2022 Georgia National Fair. Each member was partnered with a legislator and taught them how to raise and exhibit a swine project. The culmination was a showmanship class that pitted the legislators against one another using the skills their FFA member coaches provided.

Hawaii

Konawaena FFA provides leafy greens to elderly community members on a limited income who may not have regular access to a healthy diet. The chapter also provides vegetable seedlings for the seniors to plant at their homes.

Illinois

State officers attended Corn Congress sponsored by the Illinois Corn Growers and Marketing Board. Officers met with legislators to advocate for agriculture on Capitol Hill.

Indiana

Owen Valley FFA members enrolled in the school's ag mechanics course offer low-cost small-engine repairs to the community and host workshops covering small engine winterization.

Iowa

Kingsley-Pierson FFA works with Sleep in Heavenly Peace-Sioux City to provide beds to underprivileged children. Members collect materials to build 10 to 20 bed frames and use grants and donations to purchase mattresses, pillows and bedding.



Kansas

District officers have meaningful involvement in the delegate process at the Kasnsas State Convention in June. They facilitate discussions that assist the delegates in making decisions that benefit the association.

Kentucky

More than 200 middle school FFA members attended the Middle School Leadership Conference in March. Conferences were held in Frankfort and Hardinsburg, and included leadership workshops, games and time for networking.

Louisiana

St. Amant FFA hosts an animal advocacy day to pass out companion animal disaster preparation kits to the community in hopes of being prepared for a potential future natural disaster.

Maryland

Boonsboro Middle School FFA addresses community health by building exercise stations around school grounds. The stations are designed to form a walking path for community members.



Michigan

Pankow FFA is working in southeastern Michigan to strengthen a community garden. Members are creating seasoning mixes from their garden harvest and hosting three educational workshops with the community and schools.

Minnesota

Sleepy Eye FFA helps the community with its Backpack Food Program. Students in need receive bags of family meals — main dishes, fruits, vegetables and snacks — for the weekend. The bags also include personal care items, holiday treats, gifts and more.

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

Illustrations: Getty Images, Fourleaflover, CSA Images, dmitriymoroz

Mississippi

Mississippi is the only state with a Junior FFA Association. The roughly 565 members can start at the age of 8 and compete at the junior level until they enter the ninth grade. There are even junior state officers who represent their associations.

Missouri

Smithton FFA makes first-aid safety kits for its school, one of two emergency shelters in the event of a major town emergency or tornado.

Nebraska

Each spring, Norfolk FFA hosts an animal farm day at Northeast Community College where about 300 kindergartners and teachers learn about different livestock and machinery.

Nevada

To help with the overpopulation of feral cats in its community, Smoky Valley FFA traps, spays/neuters and releases the cats monthly. Some of the kittens are tamed and rehomed or placed for adoption.

New Jersey

In March, members showcase their abilities and expertise in growing ornamental plants and designing floral arrangements at the New Jersey FFA Horticultural Expo. Industry experts judge more than 800 entries.

New Mexico

The historic cemetery in Mosquero dates to the early 1800s, and many descendants of the town's original residents still live in the community. Harding County FFA answered a call to make new metal grave markers to replace those barely legible.

New York

Last summer, state officers traveled to Camp Oswegatchie to facilitate a five-week summer camp. The officers put on a workshop on transformational leadership and gave reflections on making meaningful connections at camp and being kind toward others.

North Dakota

Medina FFA partnered with a local committee to spruce up the town for its upcoming 125th anniversary. The chapter is freshening up several of the city's flower beds.

Ohio

West Holmes FFA helped the Holmes County Soil and Water Conservation District with its annual tree sale packing at Harvest Ridge in April. Members went to the fairgrounds and helped sort and pack approximately 8,000 trees for 135 customers.

Oklahoma

A record 1,690 Oklahoma FFA members attended the 50th annual Oklahoma FFA Alumni Leadership Camp last summer. They learned about the importance of leadership and how to leave a positive legacy.

Oregon

The Pine-Eagle Ag Department purchased 13.5 acres of land, 10 of which are being developed into an Ag Land Lab with a student-built equipment shed and finish work on a barn. Nearly 4 acres within the city of Halfway are being developed into nine residential lots.

Pennsylvania

Penns Manor Area FFA is refurbishing an outdoor environmental education classroom for Yellow Creek State Park. The chapter will repair and install new benches and tables, and offer its services to help maintain stream life and water quality.

Puerto Rico

After a two-year hiatus, Puerto Rico FFA hosted a three-day, two-night FFA camp at Guajataka Scout Reservation last summer. Members enjoyed adventures, learning and leadership.

South Carolina

Let's hear it for the goats! Manning FFA offers goat therapy, including goat yoga, to students and teachers suffering from anxiety and depression.

Tennessee

The state is proudly home to the oldest FFA camp in the nation! The memories members have made through FFA Camp Clements are endless. From kayaking the Caney Fork to attending workshops, FFA members make new friends, grow their leadership skills and find a love for FFA.

Texas

Taft FFA is addressing community safety by building wheelchair ramps at local businesses.

U.S. Virgin Islands

John H. Woodson Junior High FFA is growing tomatoes, lettuce and cucumbers for the Flambouyant Gardens Senior Housing Community.

Utah

Members of Skyridge FFA volunteer at Utah's Hogle Zoo for their supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs), growing bamboo in the chapter's greenhouse for the animals.

Virginia

Bassett FFA is expanding a nearby community garden. Each crop harvest is donated to the local food bank. The chapter also shares updates and gardening advice on its social media platforms.

Washington

Glacier Peak FFA has partnered with the PAWS organization to break ground on a new wildlife rehabilitation facility in Snohomish. The chapter builds avian enclosures and creates community programs to promote wildlife safety awareness.

Wisconsin

Last July, state officers enjoyed spending a week in Washington, D.C., to reflect on the year and receive leadership training.

Wyoming

Buffalo Bill FFA in Cody has a long-standing tradition of honoring the memory and birthday of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Wild West Show and Pony Express reenactments, salutes and speeches are part of the extraordinary ceremony.



North Carolina

The state is celebrating a record-high membership, growing by **8,334** members in the past year!

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

MEDIA CENTER

ARTS & CULTURE IN AGRICULTURE

– By Jessica Wesson

PODCAST

Small Town Big Ideas

Small towns in rural areas rely on agriculture to keep them going, and these FFA members in Montana want to shine a light on the industry that means so much to them.

Wibaux FFA members and their advisor started the *Small Town Big Ideas* podcast in January 2021, and it has become a must-listen. Wibaux FFA advisor Ethan Igo originally just wanted a project to help his students learn how to advocate for agriculture in a fun and innovative way. He didn't think it would grow to what it is today.

Four FFA members — Rylan Maus, Abby Begger, Ashlynn Vanner and Annika Lunde — have since begun managing the podcast. They are responsible for choosing weekly topics and leading the discussions. They've had the opportunity to interview state and national FFA officers, as well as educate themselves about agriculture. What's more, the chapter won first place in the Agricultural Communications Career Leadership Development division at the 2022 Montana FFA State Convention.



TV

FarmHer

FarmHer founder Marji Guyler-Alaniz was watching the Super Bowl in 2013 with friends a few days after leaving her job in corporate agriculture and saw the now-famous "So God Made a Farmer" Ram truck commercial. The commercial was a beautiful representation of agriculture, but something was missing. Where were the women? So, Guyler-Alaniz took to the road, photographing women farmers, or FarmHers, to tell their stories through photos. Two years later, she was still photographing women when she received a call from RFD-TV executives saying they were interested in making a TV show. That's exactly what they did.

TIKTOK

@tiktokanimaldoc

From treating serious injuries to helping newborn animals into the world, veterinarian Amanda Chang does it all. She was raised in a military family, which meant moving around a lot. That didn't stop her from having a passion for equines. She graduated from Colorado State University with a bachelor's degree and a doctorate of veterinary medicine, and then found full-time work at the Myrtle Beach Equine Clinic, which she now owns. Check out @tiktokanimaldoc for a look inside the daily journeys of a large-animal vet in South Carolina.

Photography: Courtesy of Wibaux FFA



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FFA Moment 1933

The blue corduroy jacket celebrates a momentous occasion in 2023: 90 years as part of FFA Official Dress. Its origin dates to 1933, when FFA advisor Gus Linter saw a blue corduroy jacket in the window of a hardware store in Fredericktown, Ohio. He connected with the jacket supplier and had his chapter's name stitched on the back of the jackets with gold thread. (Here, Linter presents the first jacket to Ohio FFA nearly 20 years after its 1933 debut.) The jackets were so popular at that year's national convention that the official delegates made them part of the official FFA attire. The jacket's popularity remains. The millionth FFA jacket was sold in 1964, and by 1976, 2 million jackets had been sold. Today, more than 80,000 jackets are sold annually.

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