NEW
HORIZONS
Spring/Summer 2026
FFA.ORG



Farm Fire Safety

Dakine Thompson's SAE Is All About Prevention and Preparedness

8 Innovations That Transformed Ag

Embody the Motto

How Members + Chapters Live to Serve


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PRIORITIZE PEOPLE

My favorite part of the work I get to do with the National FFA Organization might surprise you. It's not seeing my name in a byline, writing the next content plan or traveling to film a video. Simply put, it's the people.

From the talented professionals who bring ideas (like this magazine) to life, to the enthusiastic FFA in the USA Reporters who are sharpening their skills and the impressive sources who trust FFA to tell their stories, everyone I encounter reminds me that the people who support and represent the blue jacket are the best of the best.

This issue shines a light on several hardworking, servant-hearted FFA members and alums who lead by example. Our cover story, "On the Front Lines of Farm Fire Prevention," starting on page 16, features Dakine Thompson, whose Supervised Agricultural Experience focuses on equipping those in his community — and around the country — with invaluable farm safety tools and resources.

In "Renewed Strength" on page 10, Shelby Malone shares how she leaned on the community she found in FFA during a difficult time, and the 2025-26 National FFA Officer Team shouts out noteworthy individuals who shaped their FFA journeys on page 11. Finally, feel inspired as you read what sparked Sadie Lackey's decision to start her people-focused nonprofit, 118 Foundation, in "Committed to a Cause" on page 14.

Although you may have big plans for your FFA experience, I believe the people who surround us — and those we pour into — directly affect who we become. So, it's important to choose them wisely. Take time to be a friend to someone who may need one, show appreciation to those in your corner and, above all, consider additional ways you can put people first.

Lauren Quinlan

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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.

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.

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

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Cover Photography: Chris Simpson



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These FFA members, chapters, alumni and supporters from across the country embody the FFA motto by "Living to Serve."

Dakine Thompson transformed his passions into a project that equips others with tools, plans and resources for fire prevention and safety. P. 16

5 Things FROM FFA.ORG

From lasting celebrations and impactful projects to transformative experiences, fill this year with exciting possibilities.

2025 National Convention Recap

Although the 98th National FFA Convention & Expo wrapped up last November, the fun doesn't have to end. Check out this highlight reel that features event results, as well as highlights from attendees, competitors, honorees, speakers and more in our annual Proceedings. Bookmark **Convention.FFA.org** and start gearing up for the 99th National FFA Convention & Expo, scheduled for this fall in Indianapolis.

National FFA Week

Are you ready to celebrate in February? Show your spirit by planning dress-up days, crafting social media posts, planning community outreach events and, above all, telling others what FFA means to you. From downloadable templates and toolkits, to a detailed schedule and additional resources, let this be your go-to guide for a fantastic week.

Scan with your phone

Living to Serve

The last line of the FFA motto means something different to everyone, but it inspires us all to make a positive, lasting difference in the world around us. As you plan your next project, find a type of service that resonates with you, explore grant funding opportunities and check out success stories from members and chapters in every corner of the country.

Designated Events and Endorsed Activities

In addition to its own programming, the National FFA Organization partners with organizations that provide enriching, hands-on opportunities. Whether you're interested in developing an innovative solution to a real-world problem, putting your knowledge to the test or diving into career paths in agriculture, find inspiration to fuel your creativity.

Financial Assistance

No need, big or small, should keep you from achieving your goals and future plans. Thanks to support from generous donors and sponsors, National FFA can help you continue your education with a scholarship, grow your Supervised Agricultural Experience with grant funding or represent FFA with a corduroy jacket provided by the Give the Gift of Blue program.

FFA AT-A-GLANCE

Level up your FFA involvement by exploring what's available this year. Jot these dates in your calendar, then start seizing opportunities.

First of each month || Day of Service Mini-Grant application deadline

Jan. 30 || Spring Semester-Long Living to Serve Grant deadline

Feb. 15 || New Century Farmer application deadline

Feb. 21–28 || National FFA Week

March 4 || Washington Leadership Conference registration opens

March 16 || Next Gen Conference: Agribusiness Systems application deadline

April 15 || Next Gen Conference: Animal Systems application deadline

April 24 || National FFA Scholarship awards announced

June 2–5 || Week 1 of Washington Leadership Conference

June 17 || Yearlong Living to Serve Grant application deadline

July 24 || Fall Semester-Long Living to Serve Grant application opens

Dates subject to change. Check **FFA.org frequently for the latest information.*

4 Camps That Make a Splash

These state associations create unforgettable experiences through adventure-packed activities. – By Taleen Hanna

1. Kentucky FFA Leadership Training Center | Hardinsburg, Ky.

Between workshops and guest speakers, campers take a mile-long trek into the woods to see a huge oak tree, also known as "The Big Tree."

2. Summer Outdoor Leadership Retreat | Donnelly, Idaho

Idaho FFA hosts its camp on Lake Cascade, which features "survival challenges." Campers are divided into small groups and are tasked with creating a team name, flag and chant. Last year, campers built cardboard boats and raced to the finish line on the water.

3. Alumni Leadership Camp | Wagoner, Okla.

Oklahoma held its first camp in 1930 on grounds purchased by local chapters. After a brief pause, camps resumed in 1973, thanks to support from the state's Alumni Council. Today's sessions are held at Camp Tulakogee.

4. North Carolina FFA Center at White Lake | Elizabethtown, N.C.

At the second oldest FFA camp in the U.S., waterball (a sport similar to softball, but played in the water) is a fan-favorite activity. Campers use a kickball and wooden bat, and have the chance to "run" the bases.

A Summertime Staple

Scan this code to explore camps located in every corner of the country, and visit your state association's website to learn about opportunities close to home.

OFFICER OVERVIEW

AS A STUDENT-LED ORGANIZATION, THESE NINE POSITIONS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR DIRECTING THE WORK OF FFA — NOT TO MENTION A GREAT WAY TO LEVEL UP YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILLS.

– By Taleen Hanna

If you're interested in running for an FFA office this year (or in the future), you may be wondering which one aligns with your current interests and career goals. Explore how each position plays a key role in the success of your chapter, including the advisor, who provides guidance, support and wisdom.

President
- Coordinates chapter activities and serves a community representative
- Ensures meetings and events run smoothly
- Appoints committees and evaluates the progress of the chapter's Program of Activities

Vice President
- Coordinates the chapter's committees
- Works closely with the president to meet the chapter's goals
- If needed, assumes all duties of the president

Secretary
- Prepares the meeting agenda and maintains meeting minutes
- Tracks the chapter's membership and attendance
- Responsible for chapter correspondence

Treasurer
- Maintains financial records
- Collects FFA membership dues
- Tracks the chapter's income and expenses

Reporter
- Connects the chapter to local publications and news media
- Can publish a chapter newsletter, manage social media accounts and serve as the chapter's photographer
- Can also submit stories and photographs to FFA New Horizons

Sentinel
- Makes everyone in your chapter feel welcome and accepted
- Helps the president maintain order
- Ensures refreshments and supplies are kept in proper condition for chapter meetings and events

Historian
- Keeps track of the chapter's history through a scrapbook and memorabilia
- Can also share chapter activities and stories with the media and community

Parliamentarian
- Ensures the chapter conducts meetings according to proper parliamentary procedure
- Answers all questions relating to the procedures at chapter meetings

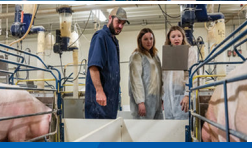
Chaplain
- Presents the invocation at chapter meetings, events and banquets
- Can also conduct reflection services at chapter events, as well as those held throughout the state

BLUE JACKETS, GOLD STANDARDS

Our organization is rooted in history and traditions. Scan this code to access a flip book and PDF of the Official FFA Manual, or visit **ShopFFA.org** to purchase a printed copy.

Hands-On Experience For Your Career in Production Agriculture





What you'll study
- Ag & Biosystems Engineering
- Ag Business, Communications, Education, Leadership, Science
- Ag Systems Technology
- Agronomy
- Animal Science
- Conservation Planning
- Dairy Manufacturing & Production
- Ecology and Environmental Science
- Food Science
- Horticulture
- Natural Resource Law Enforcement
- Park Management
- Precision Agriculture
- Pre-Veterinary Medicine
- Wildlife and Fisheries Science

Where you'll gain experience
- Animal Disease Research & Diagnostic Lab
- Cow-Calf Education/Research Facility
- Davis Dairy Plant
- Equine Teaching Facility
- Food Science Labs
- Local Foods Education Center
- Raven Precion Agriculture Center
- Ruminant Nutrition Center
- SDSU Dairy Bar
- SDSU Meat Counter
- Sheep Research/Teaching Unit
- Swine Education/Research Facility
- Water Resource Institute Lab
- Wildlife Research and Support Facility
- Young Brothers Seed Technology Lab
- 1000s of acres of agronomy research arms

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WHERE EDUCATION MEETS INNOVATION

– By Vivian Cook

Each year, FFA members represent their chapters by competing in National FFA Career and Leadership Development Events (CDEs/LDEs). Vivian Cook, Leah Urfer, Gracie Wilson and Rylee Thompson of the Montezuma FFA Chapter in Iowa were named the 2025 National FFA Agricultural Communications CDE team event winners. As part of the event, they wrote a feature story about a designated topic during the 98th National FFA Convention & Expo. Here's a section of that piece, edited for *FFA New Horizons:*

As the National FFA Organization continues to expand, both in membership and in diversity, it's evolving to meet the changing needs and ambitions of its nearly 1 million members. Through a growing list of endorsed activities, FFA is extending its reach beyond traditional conventions and competitions, ensuring every student can find a pathway that aligns with their goals and interests.

CURRENTLY, FFA ENDORSES 16 SPECIALIZED ACTIVITIES THAT EQUIP STUDENTS WITH VALUABLE, INDUSTRY-RELEVANT SKILLS.

"These new opportunities don't always fit traditional models; however, they allow students to find their niche," said William Waidelich, strategic program specialist at FFA.

Currently, FFA endorses 16 specialized activities that equip students with valuable, industry-relevant skills. Already, more than 1,000 FFA members nationwide have participated in at least one of these events. Opportunities such as the Plant the Moon Challenge, National Turfgrass Science Invitational, Make48 and several national FFA contests, including the Spanish Creed, Agricultural Education and Quiz Invitational, expose students to fields ranging from environmental science and technology to engineering and agribusiness.

To learn more about these activities or other endorsed activities within the FFA, visit **FFA.org.**

COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS?

Ready to see where the agricultural communications CDE can take you? Scan this code to learn more about the national competition.

Quiz: Farming for the Future

– By Mark Moore

Each March, National Agriculture Day serves as a time to recognize the hard work and contributions of farmers, ranchers and others connected to the industry. As agriculture evolves, these individuals explore new ways to conserve and manage resources, increase productivity and ensure longevity.

The National FFA Organization also has strong ties to production agriculture. FFA members and alums across the country, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands continue to make strides in the areas of research and development, plant and soil science, technology and more.

Ready to put your knowledge to the test? Fill in the blanks below by selecting from the list of common conservation practices used in agriculture.

1. _____includes planting between growing seasons, with the aim of improving soil health, controlling runoff of water and nutrients and preventing weeds.
2. _____involves switching up which crop is planted in a field to replenish nutrients, disrupt pests and weeds and decrease the chance of diseases.
3. By leaving crop residue on the soil surface, _____ can help producers improve soil health, reduce erosion and conserve moisture.
4. Through the process of _____, water and nutrients are applied to growing plants at specific intervals.
5. _____uses information about life cycles, interactions with the environment and control methods to economically minimize or prevent damage.
6. _____includes collecting information and managing data to improve efficiency and productivity.
7. Through _____, producers apply what's needed at the right time and in the right amounts to increase yields and reduce runoff.

COMMON CONSERVATION PRACTICES:

1. Crop rotation
2. Conservation tillage
3. Precision agriculture
4. Cover-cropping
5. Nutrient management
6. Integrated pest management
7. Precision irrigation

ANSWERS:
1. Cover-cropping
2. Crop rotation
3. Conservation tillage
4. Precision irrigation
5. Integrated pest management
6. Precision agriculture
7. Nutrient management

ALL THINGS AG

Access event planning and promotional and educational resources at AgDay.org.

Photography: Getty Images, EyeEm

Find the Fun During FFA Week

Draw inspiration from these events and activities that can get everyone involved in your chapter's festivities.

– By Taleen Hanna

National FFA Week, which is scheduled for Feb. 21–28, 2026, is quickly approaching. Not sure where to start? Check out these ideas to kick-start your brainstorming.

1. Tuesday, Feb. 24: Alumni Day

Say "thank you" by preparing a meal, writing a thoughtful note or giving a sweet treat.

2. Thursday, Feb. 26: Give FFA Day

Make a donation or encourage others to support FFA members like you!

3. Friday, Feb. 27: Wear Blue Day

Show your FFA style, then snap a photo and share it on social media. Remember to tag National FFA and include #FFAWeek in your caption.

Throughout the week, purchase $1 paper emblems at your local Tractor Supply Co. to benefit the Grants for Growing program. Snap a selfie with your emblem, then share it on social media.

TAKING CENTER STAGE

Two South Carolina chapters found a unique way to foster statewide friendly competition and create complementary advocacy opportunities during February.

Pendleton FFA hosts a Mr. FFA Scholarship Competition, which challenges male participants from its chapter and others across the state to interview with a panel of judges, perform a group dance and complete a "surprise round" that showcases their creativity. The top 10 participants answer an onstage question, and the winner receives a scholarship provided by a community sponsor.

The Miss FFA Pageant, on the other hand, is hosted by the Governor's School for Agriculture FFA Chapter. Female members from around the state compete and receive scores for a formal interview, onstage question, evening wear and their Supervised Agricultural Experience. The overall winner receives a scholarship, and additional top participants receive medals and plaques.

Make a Game Plan

Scan this code to access an activity log and templates, this year's FFA Week logo, social media kits, and more.

RENEWED STRENGTH

For Shelby Malone, FFA was more than just an organization to join — it was a lifeline.

– By Anna Campbell

Since her childhood, FFA has been a huge part of Shelby Malone's life. Growing up as the daughter of Aberdeen FFA advisor Cody Park, the organization surrounded Malone through highs and lows.

"I remember putting [my jacket] on for the first time, and something just awoke in me," Malone says. "I thought, 'This is where I'm supposed to be.'"



Shelby Malone (back row, center) served on her chapter's 2024-25 officer team.

Now an Aberdeen FFA Alumna, she played an active role in her Idaho chapter. In addition to helping create Aberdeen's middle school FFA chapter, Malone served as chapter and district president and ran for state office.

SEEKING HELP

Outside of the blue jacket, however, Malone faced struggles with her mental health, even spending some of her freshman year in high school in a treatment facility. Through it all, FFA remained her rock, giving her friends and support to carry on.

"There was a time when I had no hope for myself," Malone says. "It was the people who saw that potential in me that kept me going."

Malone recognizes that in agriculture, stigma often surrounds asking for help. She wants her story to remind others that it is human to struggle.

"It's not weak to ask for help," Malone says. "It's actually one of the strongest things you can do."

She also sees strength in hearing from others. Malone found similarities between her journey and that of 2024-25 Idaho FFA State Secretary Aislyn King, another member who bravely shared her story of mental health struggles.

"I really want people to know that they are not alone, because for a long time, I thought I was," Malone says.

Malone also hopes to foster a greater culture of mental health conversations in agriculture as she works toward her American FFA Degree. With the support she received from her family, FFA chapter, father and past advisor, Chaney Upton, Malone learned that resilience grows stronger when shared.

FIND SUPPORT

- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP**
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Call or text 988**
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): Nami.org**
- **Locate Treatment Options: FindTreatment.gov**
- **Farm Family Wellness Alliance: FarmFoundation.org/Resources/Farm-Family-Wellness-Alliance**

Photography: Copyright © FFA, Courtesy of Shelby Malone

NATIONAL FFA OFFICER

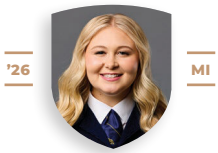
Question & Answer

Part of what makes FFA special is its people. Tell us about someone who's impacted your journey in the blue jacket.



Trey Myers
NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT

My agriculture teacher, **Caleb Wood,** absolutely changed the course and trajectory of my life. He pushed me out of my comfort zone to show up at the [Oklahoma FFA] Alumni Leadership Camp. We got super close with everyone, and those three days were transformative. This is the reason I'm serving FFA today, and the power of the blue jacket — the people who surround you in it.



Lilly Nyland
NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY

Maze Gusa was state vice president when I served as state secretary, and she supported me through it all. No matter the ups and downs — from serving as a state officer together to going through this entire national officer process — she's been a phone call away, an encouraging voice and a listening ear. Find your people like that in FFA because they will get you so far. I'm eternally grateful for her.



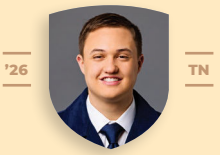
Joey Nowotny
EASTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

My agriculture teacher, **Dr. Matt Wood,** is a charismatic guy who brought me [into FFA] and treated me with a smile and kindness. I planned to go to college and play soccer, but ended up getting really sick and decided that I couldn't play anymore. I had given up on myself, my dream and everything around me, but Dr. Wood and my chapter officer team didn't give up on me. I want every person I interact with this year to know they are valued, too.



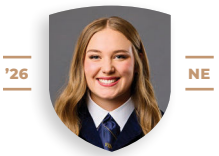
Jael Cruikshank
WESTERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

During my state's FFA convention, **Tom Rutledge** took the time to write an email and tell me that he wanted me to run for national office. I wouldn't have ran without him and the encouragement he provided when I was in serious doubt. I was humbled, and felt like there was a reason and a purpose that I was called to. I couldn't have told you what that was at the time, but here I am, in a role I never imagined myself in.



T. Wayne Williams
SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

Two weeks into my freshman agriculture science class, my advisor, **Emily Haley,** handed me an FFA officer application filled with terms like "CDEs" and "SAEs" that meant nothing to me. I gave it back, saying I'd focus on basketball. After a tough practice, she found me, handed it back and said, "Fill this out — it'll change your life." She was right. For five years, she's guided every step of my FFA journey.



Claire Woeppel
CENTRAL REGION VICE PRESIDENT

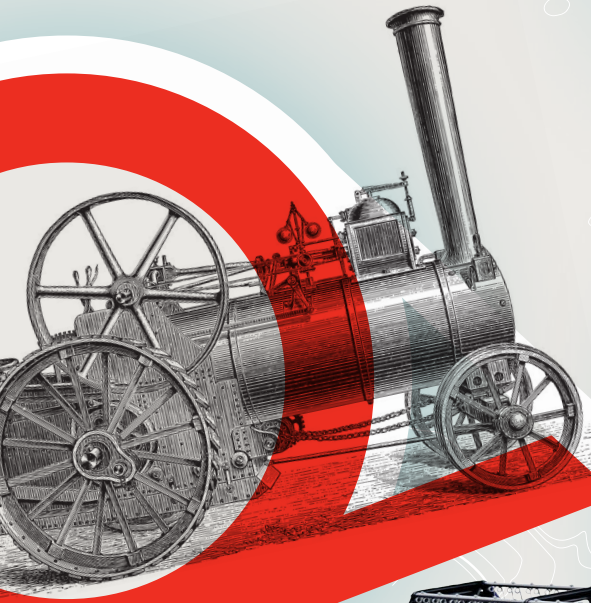
My dad was active in Nebraska FFA, and even applied to be a state officer. Although that wasn't his path, he encouraged me to get involved and supported me through every activity, competition and trip. When I became a state officer, he continued to push me and offer honest advice. His guidance and perspective have kept me grounded and motivated, and he's someone I truly look up to every day.

Photography: Copyright © FFA

Innovations That Transformed Agriculture

– By Mark Moore

From developing tools to work the land to advancing animal and plant breeding practices, transporting crops across the globe and more, agriculture has been at the forefront of innovation. Dive into these noteworthy innovations that, in some cases, continue to impact the industry today.





Artwork: Chad Owen, Photography: Getty Images



GREEN REVOLUTION

Pioneered by leaders such as Norman Borlaug, this period of the mid-20th century included the development of new crop varieties, as well as the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and targeted irrigation. This period resulted in increased food production and economic growth.



MECHANIZED FARMING

The advent of engine-powered tractors at the turn of the century brought transformational efficiency to farms. Machines replaced human and animal labor, and more acres were worked in a day. As farm implements also advanced, including plows, sprayers and harvesters, farming practices became even more productive.

SELECTIVE BREEDING

Humans have been selecting and breeding plants based on desirable traits for thousands of years — first to make wild plants more uniform, then to increase crop production. Consider how different the first corn plants looked and produced compared to what we see today. Researchers still use selective breeding to strengthen desired traits and increase yields.





SYNTHETIC FERTILIZERS

This development of man-made chemical compounds allowed farmers to more precisely target their crop's nutritional needs, leading to an increase in yields.

TRANSPORTATION

Agriculture needs reliable transportation to move products from the field to the end user. Although canals and railroads are important, the Mississippi River's 29 locks and dams, which were built in the 1930s, continue to provide a consistent method of moving vast amounts of crops to markets across the globe.

PRECISION AGRICULTURE

Today, farmers use advanced technology to precisely gather and interpret farm information, such as equipment performance, crop yields, water and nutrient needs. Armed with this information, farmers can monitor machinery, plant with increased precision, apply crop nutrients where they are needed and analyze data to make informed decisions.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

This science uses biological systems to create technologies, such as pharmaceuticals, biofuels and plant modifications, that improve performance for animals, crops and humans.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The ability for computer systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence has made aspects of farming much more efficient. Among other things, farmers can research quickly and precisely, make informed decisions easily and, in some cases, develop new products and findings.



COMMITTED TO A CAUSE

Inspired by her own experiences, Sadie Knight launched a foundation to help young adults facing cancer diagnoses and treatments. – By Jessica Mozo

Georgia FFA Alumna Sadie Knight was living and working in Washington, D.C., in October 2022 when she received a devastating diagnosis: Stage 4 Hodgkin lymphoma. At the time, Knight was preparing to start a new job at the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), where she currently works as director of grassroots and political strategy.

"I was barreling toward my dream job to work for a member of Congress when I was diagnosed," says Knight, who served as the Georgia FFA Association's 2016-17 north region vice president. "I was climbing that ladder, helping bring farmers' voices to D.C."

In the six months of chemotherapy that followed her diagnosis, Knight says her colleagues were extremely supportive.

"This job was an absolute blessing," she says. "The corn community at NCGA took care of me. The timing was serendipitous."



Sadie Knight was declared cancer-free in 2023, and she was determined to make a difference. By September 2025, the 118 Foundation gave out $40,000 in financial assistance to cancer patients.

Realizing young adults fighting cancer have few resources to lean on, Knight felt compelled to help. She founded a nonprofit called the 118 Foundation to support adults ages 18–39 and ensure they don't face cancer alone.

"As I went through treatment and healing, I met a community that was broken, underserved and underloved," Knight says. "I experienced the financial toxicity of being 25 or 26 years old and having debt collectors calling you because of the overwhelming amount of bills from cancer treatment. It's traumatizing."

A Path Forward

In June 2023, Knight was declared cancer-free and was determined to make a difference.

"On the other side of cancer, I knew I had to do something for the community I was now a part of," she says. "I felt a calling to start this foundation, but my biggest hurdle was bills and finances."

Knight shared her vision with friends at church, and an anonymous donor gave her a check for $3,000. She paid her past-due medical bills, bought a new laptop and got to work building the foundation.

"Once I got 501(c)(3) status, the money started pouring in with donations and grants," Knight says. "There aren't a lot of resources for young adults going through cancer, but the unfortunate truth is more and more young people are getting diagnosed with it."

By September 2025, the 118 Foundation gave out $40,000 in financial assistance to cancer patients actively undergoing treatment or up to a maximum of five years post-treatment. Applications are accepted four times each year.

"We give money for whatever applicants need. If you need a couple hundred bucks to take your family to dinner and get yourself a pedicure, you got it," Knight says. "But we also give money for medical bills or a mortgage payment — we want people to do what they need to feel whole again and restore joy and humanity in their life."



BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

Visit 118Foundation.org to continue exploring how Knight and her board members help young people make a comeback from cancer.

Photography: Courtesy of Sadie Knight, Getty Images, spukkato

Planting *With* Purpose

This California chapter's annual plant sale cultivates opportunities for members to experience all FFA has to offer, both inside and outside of the classroom.

– By Katie Navarra Bradley

At first glance, the Bakersfield-Highland FFA Chapter's annual plant sale looks like a vibrant community event featuring colorful rows of succulents, vegetables and flowers. A closer look, however, reveals something deeper: confidence, collaboration and communication. In 2025, the sale drew more than 500 people and raised more than $9,000 to fund chapter activities.



Bakersfield-Highland FFA members assist customers with creating personalized bouquets during their chapter's plant sale.

"Our former advisor, Craig Davidson, started the event a few years ago, and it has grown tremendously," says Chapter Vice President Julisa Dorado.

Funds from the sale cover travel, registration and incidental costs for FFA conventions, conferences and competitions. With more than 650 members, the chapter ensures every member can attend events like these at no personal cost.

"On average, we probably have 10–12 career development event teams traveling all spring, going to places like the University of California, Davis; Modesto Junior College and Cal Poly," says Amber Carter, the chapter's lead advisor. "We never ask students to pay a dime. This money helps us cover hotels, food and conference fees."

A TEAM EFFORT

All agriculture students contribute by cultivating about 300 plants. They sow seeds, transplant plugs and oversee maintenance inside their school's greenhouse until the sale. They also sell a "Scotsman Salsa Kit," complete with a recipe, a mason jar and the necessary ingredients to make salsa: tomatoes, peppers and onions.

The event also allows members to act as vendors and market their Supervised Agricultural Experience projects. On average, students earn about $500 at their booths.

"Sometimes, it's hard for our students to be involved in a farmers market, so this is a once-a-year opportunity for them to really display what they've been doing," Carter says. "They're working toward earning higher-level FFA degrees and making a little money at the same time."

For example, senior George Comacho, a fourth-year agricultural mechanics student and chapter reporter, showcased projects he built in the school's workshop.

"I'm going to major in agricultural business, so the plant sale has shown me how these processes run on a larger scale," he says. "It really shows what we can do when we step out of our comfort zone, and gives us a chance to work on our leadership skills."

This sale has sparked additional partnerships; the chapter works with Porterville College to regenerate its agriculture program. Additionally, the event has gained significant media attention from multiple online, radio and local news outlets that help promote and showcase the chapter's work, attracting more customers and strengthening community connections.

"Our efforts bring in thousands of dollars, but also open the door for more FFA members just like me," Dorado says. "Because of this event, I'm able to go to the national convention and serve as a delegate at no cost. I'm one of those students who doesn't always have the money to travel, and the plant sale provides me — and all our members — with similar opportunities."



A Bakersfield-Highland FFA member arranges flowers during her chapter's plant sale, which is held on the Saturday before Mother's Day each year.



Photography: Courtesy of Amber Carter, Getty Images, Liliya Krueger

ON THE FRONT LINES OF FARM FIRE PREVENTION

This Chuckey-Doak FFA member transformed his passions into a project that equips others with tools, plans and resources to stay safe.

BY JODI HELMER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS SIMPSON

At 15 years old, Dakine Thompson has logged more than 300 hours toward his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) and community service.

Thompson comes from a family of firefighters, and he trains alongside seasoned firefighters at the Tusculum Volunteer Fire Department in Tennessee, learning skills such as fire suppression, vehicle extractions and repelling from windows. He's also traveled to neighboring states to participate in disaster relief efforts.

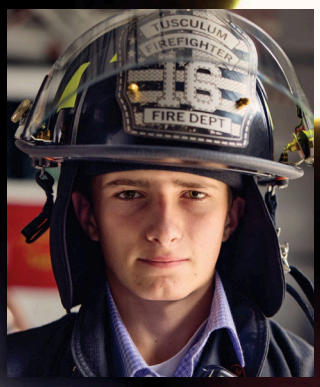
As part of his training, Thompson has learned about agricultural fire safety; it's essential knowledge for a volunteer crew that fights fires in a rural area where there are a lot of grain bins and hay fields that pose significant fire risks. The experiences inspired Thompson to focus his SAE on agricultural fire prevention and safety.

"I'm trying to educate as many people as possible on the topic," he says.

The Chuckey-Doak FFA sophomore talks to farmers about wildfire risk, equipment safety management and emergency preparations. As Thompson started visiting local farms, he realized just how unprepared many operations were.

"Most of the information I provided them was surprising because most of them don't have evacuation plans for people or livestock on their farms," he says.

Thompson created those resources. He provides emergency contact lists, farm evacuation plans and fire preparedness checklists using templates that can be customized to fit individual farms.



Left and above: Dakine Thompson of Tennessee is passionate about fire safety and is focusing on agricutural fire prevention and safety for his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE).

RISK Assessment

As part of his SAE, Thompson has identified farmers in his hometown of Chuckey, Tenn., who need help creating fire prevention and safety plans. He travels to the farms and walks the property with his fire risk assessment, checking for hazards.

"I evaluate what they need and what they're missing so I can help correct that," he says.

The SAE is an ambitious project, and Thompson plans to continue working on it until his high school graduation in 2028. Chuckey-Doak FFA advisor and agriculture education teacher Larkin Clemmer calls it an "out-of-the-box idea."

When Clemmer learned that Thompson wanted to focus his SAE on farm fire safety, he thought it was the perfect fit.

"One of the most important things is for an SAE to actually match the student," Clemmer says. "His SAE comes from his background and his passion, and he's been able to develop a risk assessment and start planning. It's something that greatly benefits the producers that he goes and sees."

On his visits to local farms, Thompson has noticed some recurring (and serious) fire safety risks.

"Some of the things that are surprising [to farmers] is the risk of dust, debris and buildup because that dust is really flammable," Thompson says. "The other common things on farms that cause fires are motors, electrical equipment and heating and air [equipment]."

Thompson has worked with a local poultry farm to create a comprehensive risk assessment, and dreams of reaching at least 10 farms with his prevention plans. To make the projects affordable, he donates a lot of fire safety equipment, including fire extinguishers, to farmers. An FFA Living to Serve Grant has helped Thompson provide lifesaving supplies to farmers and support his SAE. He's committed to preventing farm fires because the stakes are high.

"When you lose a piece of land [because] your fields or your buildings burned, that's money you're losing," Thompson says.

Right: FFA advisor Chase Murray and Dakine Thompson review a CNC plasma cutting project.

Far right: Thompson (left) and FFA advisor Larkin Clemmer discuss a shielded metal arc welding project.

Below: Clemmer provides Thompson with detailed welding instruction.







Beyond the FARM

Thompson's commitment to community service doesn't stop at fire prevention. He's also passionate about supporting veterans and preserving their stories by creating honor displays, restoring a local memorial and recruiting volunteers to distribute pins and other memorial items to honor local veterans.

Thompson also started a Facebook page and YouTube channel called "The Blue Jacket Way" that features SAE demonstrations and educational resources. He has highlighted his participation in events including Hurricane Helene





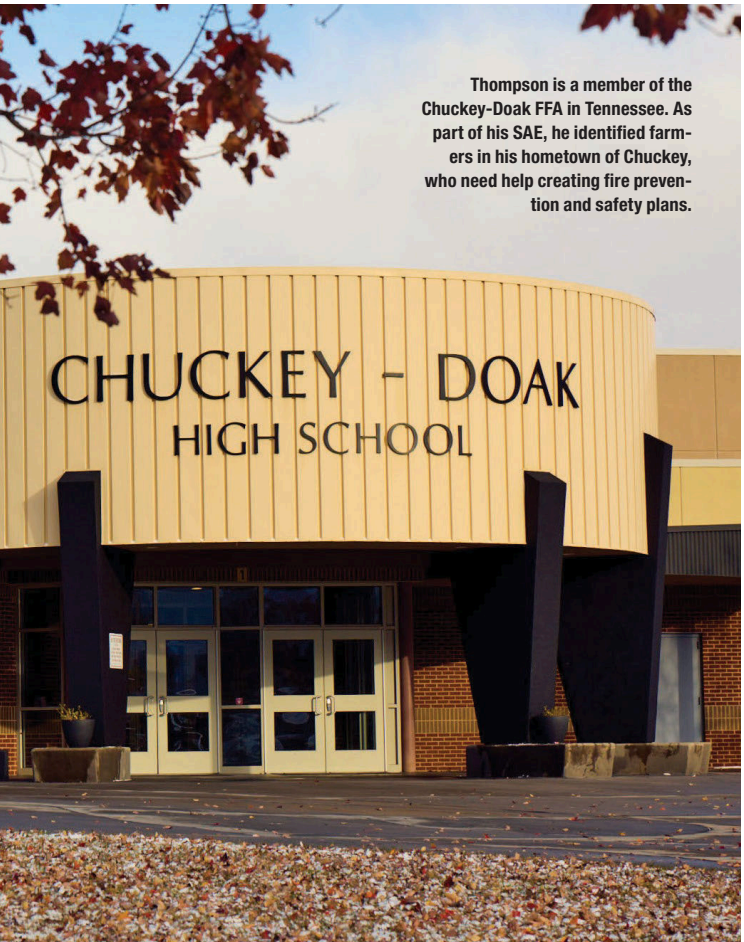
This photo: Among Thompson's top fire safety tips: Perform welding or grinding in safe areas, away from flammable materials.

Top right: Thompson (center) and members of the Tusculum Volunteer Fire Department attend a fire training session.

Bottom right: Thompson (left) and Tusculum Volunteer Fire Department member Levi Kent inspect equipment.







Thompson is a member of the Chuckey-Doak FFA in Tennessee. As part of his SAE, he identified farmers in his hometown of Chuckey, who need help creating fire prevention and safety plans.

Remembrance, Kids Day at the Farm and FFA Farm Wars. He hopes the content will encourage other FFA members to pursue ambitious SAE projects.

Clemmer appreciates how Thompson uses his platform to showcase the positive aspects of SAEs.

"As an agriculture educator, the goal is to get all students involved in an SAE, and a big part of that is helping to prepare [them] for the future," Clemmer says. "It really helps to push and motivate them; they gain skills, networking and resources. Overall, it helps develop them and build a foundation to move forward to the next level, whether that's higher education, a career or simply a hobby."

When Thompson isn't training to fight fires, evaluating farms for his SAE or volunteering with veterans memorial projects, he's in the shop restoring farm equipment. He just completed a full mechanical rebuild on his school's 1970 Ford 2000 tractor and restored a 1954 Ford sickle



“If I could offer advice to other FFA members, I would tell them to be prepared to put in the work.”
- DAKINE THOMPSON





mower; he also participated in the Greene County Fair Antique Farm and Auto Show, where he won a blue ribbon.

Thompson has also stayed busy raising a flock of laying hens. His hens just started laying eggs that he plans to sell to the community. He also participates in agricultural competitions and events, including the Greene County 4-H poultry show and auction and the fire department’s 9/11 walk, and is a member of the Chuckey-Doak FFA soil judging team.

“If I could offer advice to other FFA members, I would tell them to be prepared to put in the work,” Thompson says. “Be focused, and take it one step at a time so you don’t get overwhelmed and overstimulated.”

Firefighting remains his true passion, though. Thompson plans to continue as a volunteer firefighter after high school, and what motivates him most is the thought of protecting his community.

“It’s helping me keep everyone safe,” he says. “And teaching them about the risk of fire, how dangerous it is and how to prevent that.”

Clockwise from top: Thompson operates his fully-restored Ford 861 Powermaster tractor. Thompson’s grandfather, Sam Reaves (left), imparts some mechanic knowledge. Thompson’s experiences with the Tusculum Volunteer Fire Department (here maintaining equipment with firefighter Levi Kent) inspired him to focus his SAE on agricultural fire prevention and safety.



Allow hot engines to cool before storing farm trucks, tractors and other equipment, Thompson advises. And keep machinery free of grease and buildup.

FUTURE FOCUSED

Thompson isn't the only FFA member who's passionate about keeping others safe. Scan these codes to learn more about the inspiration behind his SAE (top) and how Wilton FFA members in Iowa designed a lifesaving grain bin invention (bottom), receiving a one-of-a-kind education.

10 Safety Tips

NO MATTER THE SEASON, IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE PREPARED. THOMPSON RECOMMENDS TAKING THESE STEPS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FARM-RELATED FIRES.

1. Develop a comprehensive farm fire safety plan.
2. Take a class through a local fire department or fire prevention nonprofit to learn more about proper fire suppression methods.
3. Keep machinery free of grease and buildup.
4. Allow hot engines to cool before storing farm trucks, tractors and other equipment.
5. Safely store fuel and other flammables.
6. Perform welding or grinding in safe areas, away from flammable materials.
7. Keep emergency contact numbers for the fire department, emergency medical services, ambulance, police department, fuel supplier and veterinarian updated and posted.
8. Establish evacuation routes and safe assembly points.
9. Trim brush and create wide borders around farm fields and buildings to reduce fire risk.
10. Post evacuation plans and make sure farmworkers know how to escape in case of emergencies.

HOOKED ON CONSERVATION

PENNSYLVANIA FFA MEMBERS LEARN ABOUT FISH AND WATER QUALITY ISSUES FIRSTHAND. – By Renee Mulvihill

When small, young channel catfish (also known as fingerlings) arrive at Shanksville-Stonycreek School each October, they are only 1–2 inches long. By the time the central Pennsylvania school's FFA members help release the catfish into nearby Somerset Lake in May, they've grown to 4–8 inches. In 2024, more than 800 catfish were raised as part of a cooperative nursery program with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Shanksville-Stonycreek FFA advisor Britton Stutzman wanted to join the program after seeing several other local schools get involved. This is her chapter's fifth year of raising channel catfish in three 500-gallon tanks set up in the school's greenhouse. Pool heaters keep the water temperature at about 80 degrees Fahrenheit, aerators help improve water quality and a dechlorinator purchased with a grant provides the fresh, non-chlorinated water the catfish need to thrive.

Many Shanksville-Stonycreek FFA members have never fished before. By the end of the school year, however, they not only know more about fishing, but also have become experts at raising fish.

"We feed the fish, we do water changes, we test the water and we check nitrates and ammonia levels in the water," Stutzman says. "Students are learning a lot of responsibility and accountability."



Andy Zolla catches catfish from one of the school's tanks so they can be transported to Somerset Lake for release.



FFA members place concrete blocks into fish spawning structures they built in the classroom.



Tori Bowers and Katy Kovacs prepare to place the fish habitat structures that were built in the classroom.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The knowledge students gain about water quality in the fish tanks translates to the world outside the school doors as well.

"They learn about erosion, pollution, runoff and all of the aspects that affect water quality," Stutzman says. "If a water change isn't done, they can see the results firsthand and they're learning how important it is to take care of the environment we have."

Conservation education continues even as students help release the fish into Somerset Lake. "The day the fish leave, the Fish and Boat Commission plans a lake instruction day where they can go in kayaks and canoes, learn about boat safety and participate in some fishing activities," Stutzman says.

On this day, students are also able to help the Fish and Boat Commission place habitats that they built during the school year in the Quemahoning Reservoir. These habitats include submerged structures where small fish can hide and turtle basking platforms, according to Don Anderson, a district commissioner with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, who helps the Shanksville-Stonycreek FFA Chapter with its nursery program.

"My hope is that a number of students will go on to pursue a career path in conservation," Anderson says. "Or if they aren't going to work in conservation as a career, maybe they will do conservation work as a volunteer and take an interest in what goes on in their community."

Photography: Courtesy of Britton Stutzman, Getty Images, zpagistock



CAPITAL GAINS

Last summer, a National FFA grant made it possible for state officer teams to attend the State Officer Summit. – By Jodi Helmer

When the 2025-26 South Dakota FFA state officers learned they'd be heading to Washington, D.C., excitement spread fast.

"Our advisor came in and said, 'Guess what? You're all going to D.C.,'" says Skyler Plucker, the 2025-26 South Dakota FFA state sentinel. "Usually only two members go, but this time, because of a grant, we could all go. I'd never been to D.C. before — it was awesome."

The National FFA Student Engagement and Travel Assistance Grants, which are sponsored by corporate partners CHS, Ford, Bayer, Greif, Syngenta and Valent, help fund transformative experiences like the State Officer Summit conference, where student leaders from across the country gather to develop leadership skills, advocate for agriculture and strengthen their team bonds.

A Life-Changing Experience

Without the grant, most state officer teams would have been limited to sending two delegates; the funds allowed entire teams to travel to Washington, D.C., together. For 2025-26 Massachusetts FFA State Secretary Reese Hughes, traveling to the nation's capital offered something deeper than a chance to see the sights.

"We had the amazing opportunity to talk to our representatives on Capitol Hill and practice having those conversations," Hughes says. "It helped us learn how to be better listeners and how to represent our peers and our state effectively."

The experience was equally valuable for the 2025-26 Maine FFA State Officer Team.

"There were over 300 state officers from different states," says Callie Cullins, who's serving as the 2025-26 Maine FFA state vice president. "We worked together collaboratively but also got to advocate for our own state's agriculture. We met with one of our representatives and two of our senators to talk about some of the bigger issues we see in Maine agriculture and how we can try to tackle those."

The lessons learned throughout the five-day conference extended beyond leadership. Plucker built connections (and friendships) with officers from other states, and it taught the South Dakota FFA state officers valuable lessons about facilitating programming for different groups.

"It gave us resources and confidence to bring back to our younger members," Cullins adds.

From Maine to Massachusetts to South Dakota, the impact of these travel grants went far beyond the destination.

"Being there together, as a team, and figuring out how we work best wasn't just about learning leadership in theory," Hughes says. "We got to live it."



The Maine FFA State Officer Team observes the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial.

LEARN TO LEAD

Scan this code to check out upcoming events that qualify for National FFA Student Engagement and Travel Assistance Grants and start an application.

Above: The Maine FFA state officers pause on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

Photography: Courtesy of Callie Cullins



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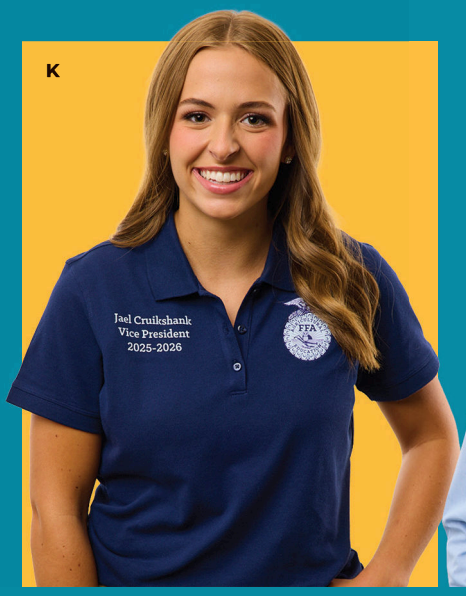











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AVENUES IN ANIMAL SCIENCE



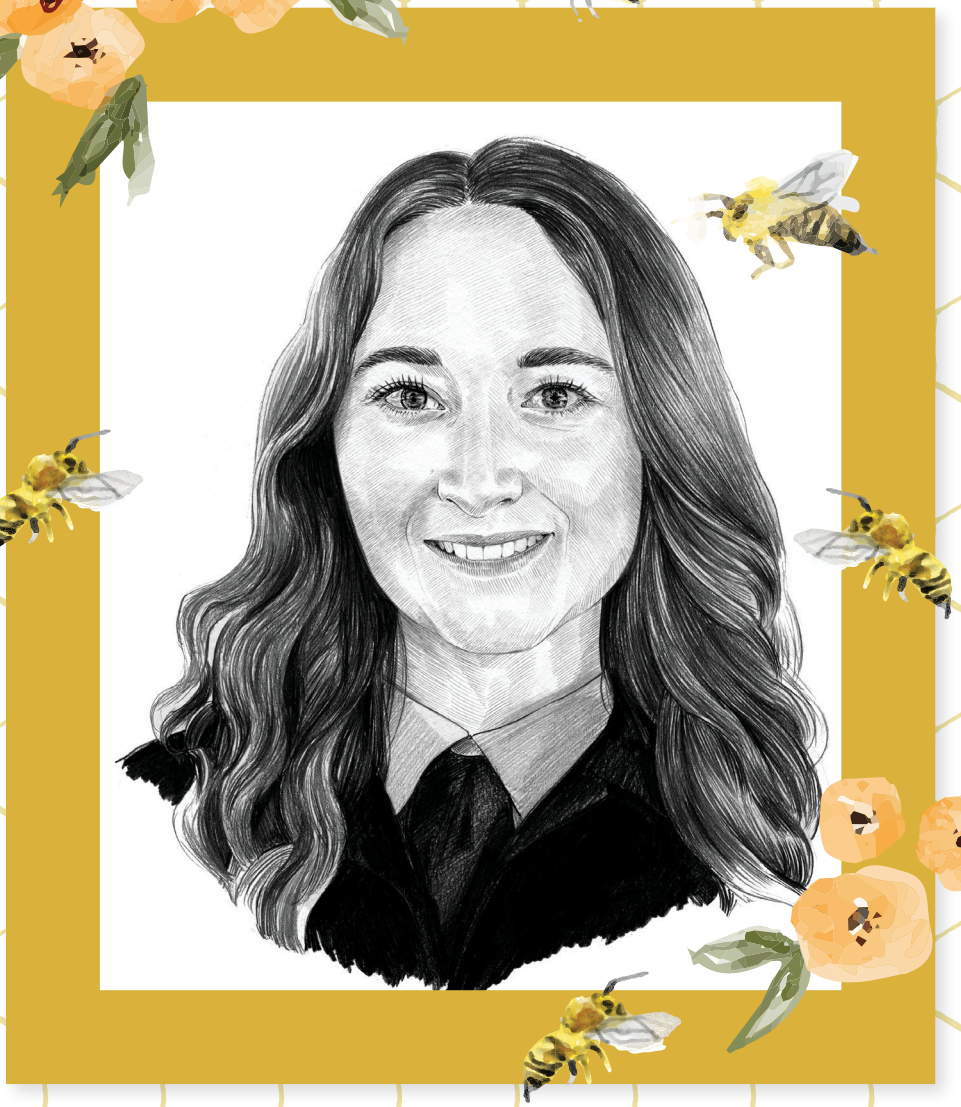
FFA ALUMNI SHARE THEIR CAREER JOURNEYS — AND OFFER ADVICE TO HELP YOU FIND YOURS, TOO.

By Katie Navarra Bradley • Illustrated by Lauren Crow

"WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO AFTER GRADUATION?"

It's a big question many of you have likely heard multiple times already and will several more times until you walk across the stage at commencement. Whether you already know the career path you want to follow or feel overwhelmed by the options available, your journey might take unexpected twists and turns to an agriculture career pathway you might not have considered.

These FFA Alums and advisors share how they found success in animal science careers that align with their passions and skills. Though their experiences and job titles vary, each shares one thing in common: FFA played a defining role in shaping their interests and futures. Their stories prove that, through curiosity, openness to learning and community, a career path in agriculture is possible.



LINDSY MOORE

- **National FFA Agricultural Proficiency Award Winner**
- **College: Coastal Pines Technical College and Ogeechee Technical College**
- **Major: echocardiography**

Beekeeping, specifically raising and selling queen bees, began as a summer job for Lindsy Moore. She began working for Sanders Honey as part of her supervised agricultural Experience (SAE) when she was a member of the Ware County FFA in Georgia. Now, four years later, it is her dream job, and her SAE was selected as the 2025 National FFA Agricultural Proficiency Award winner in the Specialty Animal Production – Entrepreneurship/ Placement category.

Building a beekeeping business is an expensive endeavor, she says, so she is completing core classes at Coastal Pines Technical College and will transfer to Ogeechee Technical College to earn an associate's degree in echocardiography. She plans to use an echocardiography job to fund her own beekeeping operation.

"On my days off from class, I work with [Sanders Honey co-owner] Brad Sanders, who continues to teach me about beekeeping and the business side of beekeeping," she says. "If you're interested in beekeeping, learn from another beekeeper for as long as you can before starting your own business — you'll need the help."

She credits FFA with giving her confidence, discipline and connections to turn her interests into a viable animal science business.

Her advice to other FFA members: "Never give up. I'm allergic to bee stings, but that hasn't stopped me" she says. ***"There will be things in life that will try to block you from pursuing your dreams, but you can't let that happen. You can always find a way around it."***

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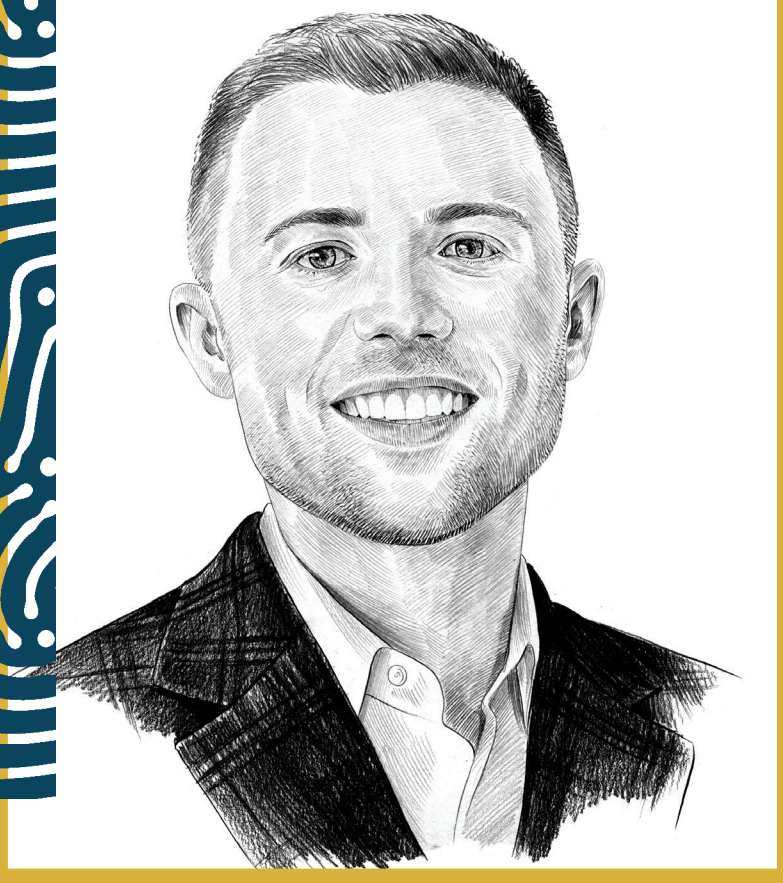


BRYCE WINFREY

- **Associate director, channel operations, Merck Animal Health**
- **College: Texas Tech University**
- **Degree: Bachelor of Science in agricultural communications, minor in animal science**

Raised in a family with deep agricultural roots, Bryce Winfrey was surrounded by educators, farmers, cattle producers and animal health professionals. Their influence inspired him to explore a wide range of careers within the industry. As a member of the Seminole FFA Chapter in Texas, and later a Texas FFA state officer, Winfrey developed a passion for animal health while raising livestock for stock shows.

"Those early experiences taught me the importance of a safe, sustainable food supply," he says. ***"I'd encourage FFA members to explore broadly and lean into the full range of FFA opportunities, whether that is career development events, judging teams, leadership roles, internships or volunteering, to discover what you enjoy and where you excel."***

At Texas Tech University, Winfrey built the technical and professional skills essential for success. Classroom studies strengthened his animal science foundation, while participation in college judging, student government and campus organizations honed his communication, presentation and leadership abilities. Those experiences, he says, broadened his perspective and created a professional network he continues to rely on today.

His advice to students: "If animal health interests you, focus on developing both technical and soft skills — communication, teamwork and problem-solving," he says. "The FFA networking opportunity is invaluable; connect with advisors and industry professionals to learn about roles in the industry. There is a strong demand for talented people in animal health, and we need you to help us solve the challenges of the future."

ERIC DUARTE

Eric Duarte grew up on a family dairy farm but initially had zero interest in FFA. As a sophomore, he joined the Newton New Jersey FFA Chapter but was inactive until his advisor insisted he attend the 2007 national FFA convention. That trip ignited a passion that defined his career path.

He became a chapter officer and later served as the New Jersey FFA president. After earning a business administration degree from Centenary College, he accepted a full-time position with the New Jersey FFA — a role that opened the door to a leadership development position with the National FFA Organization.

"As a state officer, I really latched on to mentorship, facilitating and helping people learn," Duarte says. "The opportunity to serve as state staff in New Jersey allowed me to implement all of that, and when the job opened at the national level, it was a no-brainer."

Today, Duarte works in human resources at Elanco Animal Health. "My job is to deliver strategy on learning and development initiatives across a global audience," he says.

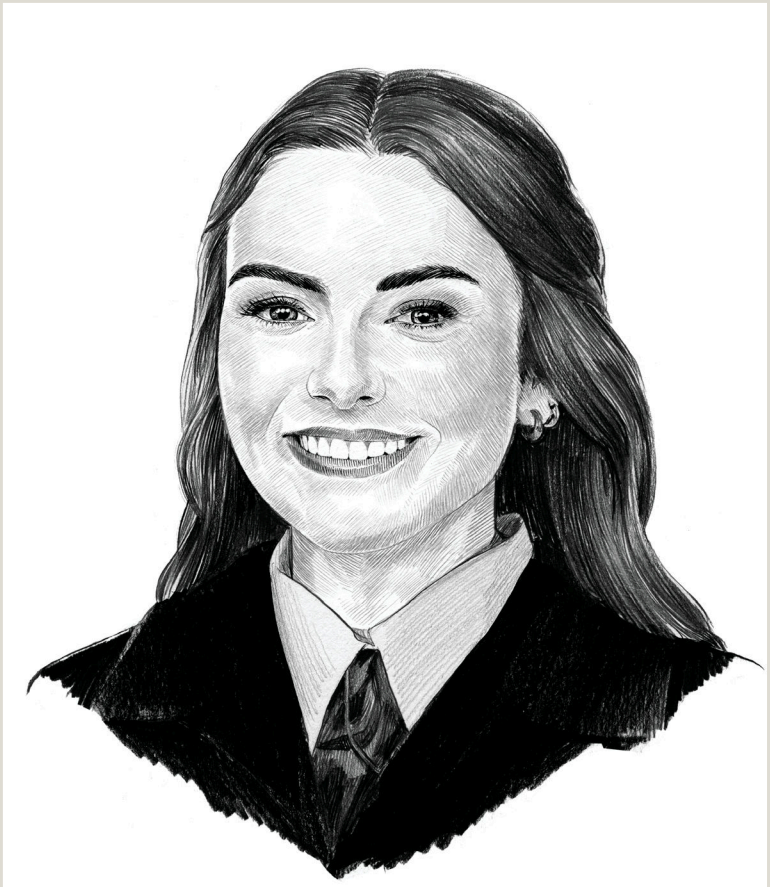
His advice to students considering a career in agriculture: ***"Don't automatically write off HR, as leadership is a crucial skill everywhere."***

- **Director of global talent, Elanco Animal Health**
- **College: Centenary College**
- **Degree: Bachelor of Science in business administration and management**



ABIGALE JACOBSEN

- 2024-25 National FFA Western Region Vice President
- College: California State University, Chico
- Major: animal science



Growing up in the suburbs of Sacramento, Calif., Abigale Jacobsen didn't have a deep connection to livestock or agriculture, but competing on Dressage horses sparked her curiosity about veterinary medicine. Joining her high school agriculture science class expanded that interest, giving her hands-on experience in showing sheep and exploring animal management and marketing, using both sheep and horses as multiple supervised agricultural experience (SAE) projects.

"A lot of my passion for, and the reason I majored in animal science, came from those classroom experiences," she says. ***"The course let me see animal science from both the livestock management and business sides through hands-on labs at the school farm."***

Jacobsen is studying animal science at Chico State University. After serving a term as a California FFA state officer, she took a gap year to run for a National FFA office. That pursuit was a success; she was elected the 2024-25 Western Region National FFA Vice President, and will return to Chico State in January 2026.

Her advice to others exploring animal science: "Say yes to the people willing to mentor you or give you an opportunity. You never know where it might take you."





- **Agriculture educators and FFA Advisors**
- **Dover FFA in New Hampshire**

CARRIE HOUGH & KATIE GREEN

Carrie Hough and Katie Green took different paths to agricultural education, but now share the same goal: to help members of the Dover FFA in New Hampshire discover their passions for agriculture.

For Hough, the journey began at the University of New Hampshire, where she designed her own major that combined education and agriculture, after discovering no formal agricultural education program existed. ***"One of my favorite classes, Ed 500, let me work with a high school ag teacher. It confirmed this was the right path for me,"*** she recalls. Today, Hough teaches animal science and companion and large animal courses, blending classroom learning with hands-on experience. A former member of the Coe Brown Much-to-Do FFA Chapter and a former Granite State FFA officer, Hough's honors include being named a National FFA Agriscience Fair finalist, an Agricultural Proficiency Award winner for maple syrup production, a Granite State FFA Connor Memorial Outstanding Teacher/FFA Advisor Award winner and a National Teacher Ambassador for FFA.

Her colleague, Katie Green, took a different route. Growing up in Massachusetts without an FFA program, Green explored agriculture through 4-H. While studying dairy nutrition at Cornell University, a class called "Youth Organizations in Agriculture" changed everything. "It made me realize I wanted to teach ag," she says. Now, Green co-teaches animal and honors veterinary science classes, manages student assistants, oversees the care of more than 75 animals and advises FFA activities.

"College broadened my perspective and helped me see the diversity of agriculture," she says. "I took unique classes, like exotic avian husbandry and a propagation class."

Both educators encourage students to explore widely. "Say yes to opportunities," Hough advises. Green adds, "Take those unusual electives — you never know when that knowledge will come in handy."

Pave Your Path

When it comes to working with animals, the possibilities are endless. Visit AgExplorer.FFA.org/Focus/Animal-Systems/ to find a career that aligns with your passions and interests.



Photography: Getty Images, cynthzl

EMBODYING THE MOTTO:

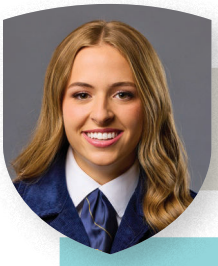
LIVING TO SERVE

COMPILED BY LAUREN QUINLAN AND JUSTIN DAVEY

Check out how chapters and members across the country "Live to Serve," as reported on by the 2025-26 FFA in the USA reporters.

The FFA in the USA Reporter program consists of nearly 250 student journalists who are tasked with producing articles, photo slideshows, videos and other content about FFA throughout the year. They are responsible for the dispatches you'll read on these pages. To find the full articles — created by FFA members, for FFA members — scan this code or visit **FFA.org/FFA-in-the-USA.**

WESTERN Region



2025-26 NATIONAL FFA VICE PRESIDENT:

Jael Cruikshank,

OREGON • Bend FFA



Planted by Chance, Growing by Choice

By Hayden Pascua, Hawai'i

Jordan Delos Reyes-Kaplan's FFA journey in Hawai'i showcases how service and leadership can grow from unexpected beginnings. The Kea'au FFA Chapter alumnus was placed in an agriculture class during the 2021-22 school year after a schedule change placed him in unfamiliar territory. That unexpected shift became the starting point for his leadership, community service and environmental conservation. Reyes-Kaplan held the roles of chapter vice president, chapter president and Hawai'i FFA state secretary, and he's currently studying tropical ecosystems and agroforestry management at Hawai'i Community College.



Kea'au FFA alumnus and past Hawai'i FFA state secretary Jordan Delos Reyes-Kaplan gives a presentation at a leadership workshop.

Photography: Copyright © FFA; Courtesy of Jordan Delos Reyes-Kaplan; Getty Images, wwing, Taalulla

Turning Mums and Meals Into Memories

By Emma Crabtree, Texas

In Texas, homecoming isn't just a celebration — it is a tradition. For the Jacksboro FFA Chapter, it's also the perfect time to serve its community. To wrap up a week full of school spirit and celebration, Jacksboro FFA passed out a meal and a mum to 120 people around the Jacksboro community.

A Barn of Positive Impact

By Jarren McBride, New Mexico

What's a big, red barn doing in the middle of Albuquerque, N.M.? It's not for housing hay, and it's not for stables. Every day, for the two weeks that comprise the New Mexico State Fair, FFA chapters from across the state volunteer to educate residents about agriculture.



Alaska's Agricultural Legislator

By Liam Wade, Alaska

Alaska Senator Shelley Hughes empowers the next generation of producers, including advocating for agricultural education. "We promote vocational education classes in high school to inspire future electricians, carpenters and mechanics," she says. "We need to do the same for farmers, ranchers and other agriculture careers."

SOUTHERN Region





2025-26 NATIONAL FFA VICE PRESIDENT:

T. Wayne Williams,

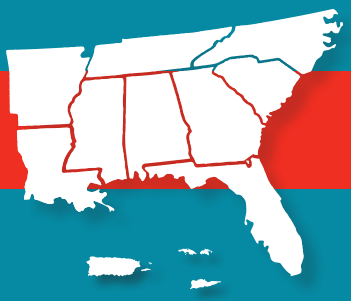
TENNESSEE

Woodbury FFA

Every Coin Counts

By Lilia Mendez, Georgia

Rome Middle FFA hosted a Change Challenge to encourage students and staff to donate spare change for a good cause. The group set a goal to raise $250 of loose change to donate to a women and children's shelter, which turned into an incredible $1,000.



SOUTHERN Region



Millbrook FFA members (from left to right) Amber Tirado, Brighid Lee, Erin Haugland, Rachel Winter and Eva Awasthi, attend the N.C. State Youth Hunger Institute.

One Paper at a Time

By Amber Tirado, North Carolina

Members of the Millbrook FFA Chapter are participating in the N.C. State Roberts Global Ag Research Externship, an externship that was created in 2024 to pair high schoolers with graduate mentors based on their research interests. From October through March, participating students write short research papers based on a country of their choosing that are presented at the N.C. Youth Institute hosted at North Carolina State University in April. The aim of the Institute? Finding solutions to end hunger worldwide.

From the Barn to the Classroom

By Gabriella Ramirez, Florida

From an early age, Emily Morgan knew she wanted to work with animals in some way. Teaching, however, wasn't always part of her plan. What began as a new challenge quickly became a meaningful career. Morgan is currently a veterinary science teacher and FFA advisor for the Ferguson FFA Chapter in Florida.

Greene County Greenhands

By Sophey Errington, Mississippi

Greene County FFA officers empowered Greenhands to grow as leaders and to make a difference in their communities. Between a skit, workshops and games, freshman and sophomores learned how to become better versions of themselves.

Photography: Copyright © FFA; Courtesy of Amber Tirado, Keeley Runge; Getty Images, Cydney Cockerill

CENTRAL Region



2025-26 NATIONAL FFA VICE PRESIDENT:

Claire Woeppel,

NEBRASKA

Chambers FFA

Advocating for Agriculture

By Brody Medina, Wyoming

Members of the Cheyenne Frontier FFA visited Washington, D.C., to discuss pesticide regulations and endangered species protection with national leaders. The team shared their work with members of the House Committee on Natural Resources, the Department of Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others.

St. James FFA members work together to load donated corn into an auger, which deposits it into a grain trailer that will bring it to the local elevator at the end of the day.



Corn Drive Cultivates a Spirit of Giving

By Keeley Runge, Minnesota

Every October, as combines roll through golden fields and trucks haul freshly harvested corn, the St. James FFA Chapter takes part in a harvest of its own — one rooted not in grain, but in gratitude. For years, the chapter has made it a tradition to dedicate a day during harvest season to its annual Corn Drive, a community-wide effort that embodies the final line of the FFA motto of "Living to Serve."

CENTRAL Region

Pigs With Purpose

By Molly Mayes, Oklahoma

Nearly seven years after donating her first show pig to the Oklahoma Pork Council's Pork for Packs program, Cashion FFA member Maggie Carroll continues to donate her pigs annually to fight hunger.

Service in Adversity

By Marissa Gottman, Missouri

Following the serious spinal injury of one its members, JaTayvion "JT" Thomas, the Palmyra FFA Chapter did what it does best — it served. A chapter-organized benefit trap shoot and silent auction raised more than $4,000 for the Thomas family.

EASTERN Region



2025-26 NATIONAL FFA VICE PRESIDENT:

Joey Nowotny,

DELAWARE • Laurel FFA

Blessings in a Backpack

By Cole Bauman, Ohio

Liberty Center FFA members packed "Blessings in a Backpack," with meals, toiletries, socks and small holiday surprises for families in need. "We realized there were families struggling to put meals on the table," says chapter vice president Maddie Sattler. "We wanted to do something that would help in a tangible way.



Photography: Copyright © FFA; Courtesy of McKenzie Wilson; Getty Images, Witthaya Prasongsin, FoxysGraphic

Preserving Patriotism

By Emma Lenkaitis, Illinois

Bureau Valley FFA members are taking initiative to share patriotism within their community. Chapter officers came up with a goal to replace 40 tattered and damaged American flags along Highway 40, a main traffic route.

Members and Farmers Harvest Potatoes

By Hannah Shaw, Maine

By cutting the school's summer break by three weeks to create an additional school break during harvest time, Mars Hill FFA members join farmers during Harvest Break, preserving potato farming traditions and strengthening community bonds.

Climbing for K9s

By McKenzie Wilson, Virginia

Bassett FFA members traveled to Roanoke, Va., last fall to participate in the 2025 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb event alongside Roanoke City Fire-EMS. The event honors the 343 firefighters who died on Sept. 11, 2001. Members also chose to honor the K9 search and rescue dogs who served at Ground Zero in the weeks and months following the attacks. The chapter handed out 300 custom-made lanyards to participating firefighters, each carrying the name and biography of one of 28 heroic K9s who served in the aftermath of the attacks.



Bassett FFA members pass out K9 lanyards to 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb participants.

INTERNSHIP INSIGHTS

FROM CORPORATE OFFICES TO CAMERAS, THESE PAST NATIONAL OFFICERS DISCOVERED LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP, TEAMWORK AND CAREER GROWTH. – By Anna Campbell

As a high school or college student, internships might not be on your radar, but for three 2023-24 national FFA officers, last summer was all about rolling up their sleeves, diving into new environments and discovering how much learning and growth can come from stepping outside the classroom.

After interning with their respective National FFA corporate partners, Morgan Anderson, Emily Gossett and Grant Norfleet came away with lessons they will carry far beyond one summer.

Morgan Anderson, RFD-TV

From script-writing and editorial meetings to anchoring and producing, every day looked different for Morgan Anderson as she received a crash course in broadcast journalism at RFD-TV. A longtime news enthusiast, she found the unpredictability both thrilling and demanding.

"Breaking news was both the most thrilling and most challenging part of the job," Anderson says. "Sometimes it hit just two minutes before my show aired ... I had to move fast."

Her biggest takeaway? "Show eagerness to learn, even when it's unfamiliar or hard," she says. "There's no growth in the comfort zone!"



Morgan Anderson produces the Market Day Report newscast, which aired on RFD-TV.

Emily Gossett, TRACTOR SUPPLY CO.



Emily Gossett (right) and a couple of her team members take a quick "paws" during a media event day that promoted Tractor Supply Co.'s Purina Days event.

As a member of the public and investor relations team at Tractor Supply Co., Gossett led a project to design a system for LinkedIn content creation. Although the work was challenging, she says the culture made all the difference.

"No one expected me to be perfect; they just wanted me to be willing to learn and be invested," she adds.

For those preparing for interviews, her advice is simple: Do your research, but don't forget to share personal stories. "Be a storyteller," she adds. "Let your experiences bring your answers to life."

Grant Norfleet, SIMMONS FOODS

Norfleet spent his summer as a learning and development intern with Simmons Foods. Some days he was prepping workshops; others he was on the production floor, talking with employees to improve leadership training. The variety pushed him to collaborate in new ways.

"Simmons gave me countless opportunities to strengthen my collaboration and teamwork skills," Norfleet says. "None of my projects could have been completed alone."

His advice for future interns is to "be authentic and let your curiosity show."



From his cubicle to the production floor, Grant Norfleet spent his summer days learning and growing in Arkansas.

"Companies aren't just looking for a perfect resume — they want someone who is eager to learn, asks questions and connects with people."

ROOM TO GROW

After their year of service is complete, many past national officers go on to accomplish big things in their chosen fields. Scan this code to read about 2022-23 National FFA Western Region Vice President Ryan Williamson's summer spent at BASF, in his own words. You can also visit ForeverBlueNetwork.org to create an account and explore job and internship postings.

Photography: Courtesy of Morgan Anderson, Grant Norfleet and Emily Gossett



Silver Sage FFA members cut the ribbon on their brand-new Spring Creek High School Agriscience Building.

PROCESSING POSSIBILITIES

Spring Creek High School's meat processing facility is making a huge community impact — and equipping FFA members with skills to succeed.

– By Anna Campbell

In early September 2025, Spring Creek High School, home of the Silver Sage FFA Chapter, celebrated the opening of a brand-new facility. The 4,800-square-foot Spring Creek High School Agriscience Building includes classrooms, animal and plant science labs and a Nevada Department of Agriculture-approved Custom Cut meat processing facility that supports hundreds of students each day.

Located in Elko County, the heart of Nevada ranching country, the facility is being celebrated by the community. The ribbon-cutting ceremony featured FFA members, educators and Nevada Department of Agriculture Director J.J. Goicoechea.

"Agricultural education is critical to the health of our industry, food supply chains and rural development," Goicoechea says. "The new agriscience building at Spring Creek High School, and the curriculum that will be taught there, is an exciting investment into career and technical education, offering opportunities to high school students in the area that will further positively impact the local community."

Heather Steel, career and technical education (CTE) facilitator for the Elko County School District, says students involved in CTE programs have a higher graduation rate than those who aren't, and receive valuable career-related skills.

"Giving students the opportunity to actually develop skills that will lead to employment in high-wage, high-demand jobs in Nevada is a critical part of what we do," Steel says. "Without the opportunities for students to engage in hands-on learning, they are not actually able to develop those skills."

USDA-Approved

In addition to providing career readiness opportunities at the local level, the facility provides the state with room to grow — with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval.

"Nevada now has the ability to certify meat processing as USDA-approved," says Kristen Kirkpatrick with the Nevada FFA Association.



The Spring Creek High School Agriscience Building includes classrooms, animal and plant science labs, and a meat processing facility.

"Until now, ranchers had to send their beef out of state, so this new capability will save money for ranchers because they can butcher and process locally, and it will create a lot of jobs. With this state-of-the-art meat lab, students will now be well-trained to go into this new career path."

Spring Creek High School science teacher Brieanna Valdez says that the Silver Sage FFA Chapter's advisor, Ty Smith, was one of the driving forces behind the project, and he continues to plan for its future.

"[He] has some incredible plans for the meat science lab, including processing livestock and game for community members and becoming USDA-certified through the Nevada Department of Agriculture," Valdez says.

With help from the community and district, Spring Creek High School is showing belief in the future of agriculture. From the classroom to the cutting floor, the agriscience building is shaping a stronger, more sustainable future for Nevada agriculture.

FIND A WAY FORWARD

If there's a need in your community, FFA can help — just ask Kelliher FFA. Scan this code to see how this Minnesota chapter used Grants for Growing funding to establish a yearlong meat-processing class.

Photography: Courtesy of Kayla Church and Kristen Kirkpatrick



ON THE RECORD: WILL CLARK

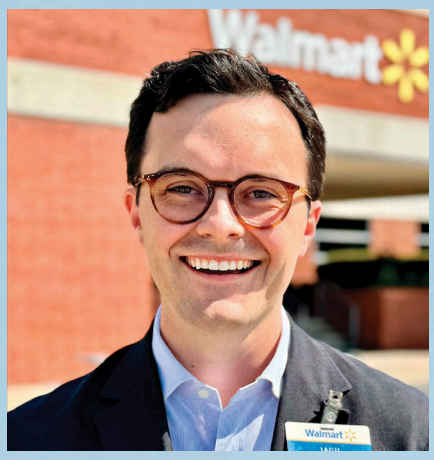
This past Arkansas state officer and current Walmart executive continues to draw on his FFA experiences and pay it forward to future generations of members.

– By Jessica Mozo

STUDY SUSTAINABILITY

The Walmart Foundation has been instrumental in shaping the National FFA sustainability program. Scan this code to access a learning module about the broad field of sustainability.

Will Clark competed in the agricultural communications career development event (CDE) as a freshman, and his team placed second in the state of Arkansas.



"Success doesn't come without effort. Remember the lessons you learned in FFA, even after you've taken off the blue jacket."

– WILL CLARK

Will Clark grew up a stone's throw away from Walmart's home office in Bentonville, Ark., but he never planned to work for the retail giant when he graduated high school. A decade later, however, Clark works as a senior manager of communications and engagement for Walmart and has found a fulfilling career with the No. 1 company on the 2025 Fortune 500 list.

We chatted with Clark about how his time in FFA prepared him for this role and what advice he would share with current FFA members.



Q: What is your favorite FFA memory?

A: In high school, I was a member of the Bentonville FFA Chapter. My dad once told me, "Will, my only requirement is that you take an introduction to agriculture class your freshman year, join FFA and compete in one contest. If you don't like it, you can quit." Of course, he was right — I quickly fell in love with FFA.

I competed in the agricultural communications career development event as a freshman, and our team placed second at state. The following year, I had the opportunity to compete at a national convention, which introduced me to agricultural communications as a potential career path. After graduation, I was honored to serve as the 2015-16 Arkansas FFA state secretary — an experience that remains one of the most impactful years of my life. The following year, I was proud to represent Arkansas as its national officer candidate.

Q: How did you achieve the career you have today?

A: I attended the University of Arkansas, where I majored in agricultural communications, and later earned my master's in agricultural and extension education. Along the way, I met friends who worked at Walmart and spoke highly of the opportunities and culture. With Walmart right in my backyard — and with its people-led values at the heart of the business — I decided to explore a career here.

Since joining Walmart, I've gained a deep appreciation for how closely the company is tied to agriculture and the vital role we play as the bridge between producers and consumers. I began my career on the Walmart+ membership team, where I saw firsthand how we serve customers by offering meaningful benefits like free grocery delivery. Today, I have the opportunity to help shape and improve the experiences of customers and members every day.

Q: What advice would you give to current FFA members?

A: Be authentic and be willing to put in the hard work. For high school and college graduates, that means keeping your resume updated and showing up to interviews prepared. Success doesn't come without effort. Remember the lessons you learned in FFA, even after you've taken off the blue jacket. Those experiences continue to shape who you are and how you lead. Be confident and know that with hard work and grit, you can get there.

Q: You've been involved in the National FFA Alumni and Supporters. Why is that important to you?

A: Serving on the National FFA Alumni and Supporters Advisory Committee has been a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with people who were part of my FFA journey. Walmart has a corporate Alumni and Supporters Chapter, and several former state officers and members are actively involved in it. It's inspiring to see how you can continue making an impact in the lives of FFA members long after your time as a student has ended.

Photography: Courtesy of Will Clark, Getty Images, Tanja Ivanova

MEDIA CENTER

ARTS & CULTURE IN AGRICULTURE

– By Lauren Quinlan

CHECK OUT WHAT'S NEW AND TRENDING IN AGRICULTURE MEDIA.

SOCIAL MEDIA

State Convention Coverage

It's state convention season! Follow @nationalffa on Instagram, then explore these state associations that go above and beyond in creating captivating content, growing their audiences and spotlighting FFA opportunities.

- **Delaware FFA (@delaware_ffa)**
- **Florida FFA (@floridafuturefarmer)**
- **Kansas FFA (@ksffa)**
- **Puerto Rico FFA (@puertoricoffa)**
- **Washington FFA (@washingtonffa)**



Book

Faith, Family and a Farm Kid's Life

From announcing pig races as a Missouri FFA chapter president to leading the National Association of Farm Broadcasting for more than a decade, Tom Brand's connections to agriculture run deep. In his recently published book, *Welts on Your Butt a Calf Could Suck: Reflections on Faith, Farming, and a Farm Kid's Life,* Brand shares stories and lessons learned from his upbringing on a diversified livestock and grain farm.

VIDEO SERIES

Where the Food Comes From

Since January 2022, *Where the Food Comes From* episodes have taken viewers inside farms, research labs, college campuses and more. The series, which airs on RFD-TV and YouTube, was recently selected by the United States Department of Agriculture as a key component of the National Ag in the Classroom program that serves students and teachers in public, private and homeschool programs nationwide. From milking water buffalo to crafting cheese and collecting eggs, tune in for an up-close look at the people who help feed our world.

Photography, this page: Getty Images, Kilito Chan, Westend61, Ron and Patty Thomas. Photography, opposite page: Copyright © FFA; Courtesy of IUPUI Ruth Lily Special Collections and Archives

PLUG IN
Scan this code to learn about joining FFA Alumni and Supporters, creating a Forever Blue Network account, registering for upcoming events and more.







FFA Moment
1971

Fifty-five years ago, the National FFA Alumni Association (now known as the National FFA Alumni and Supporters) was established to provide an avenue for those looking to stay connected to the blue-and-gold after their active membership came to an end.

Today, this program is sponsored by corporate partners Nutrien Ag Solutions and Tractor Supply Co. and includes an extensive network of individuals and chapters located in every corner of the country. From sharing their expertise to volunteering at events, judging application materials, helping with competition prep and more, FFA Alumni and Supporters are committed to helping young agriculturists succeed.

"Joining FFA Alumni and Supporters means staying connected to the mission of FFA with a professional network of more than 800,000 people," says National FFA Alumni and Supporters Director Allie Tucek. "Our members have the opportunity to impact the next generation of leaders by donating their time, talents and treasures."



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