



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

October 10, 2005

Push yourself again and again. Don't give an inch until the final buzzer sounds.
-Larry Bird

On Monday, September 26th, I joined state officers from Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri and Mississippi at the Mid-South Fair in Memphis. Monday was FFA Day at the fair, which meant FFA members from each state came to compete in the numerous events. After spending the morning visiting the competitions and touring the fairgrounds, I served as the keynote speaker at the Agribusiness Luncheon. Once the luncheon was over, I hopped in a car towards southeast Missouri for a chapter visits tour. Nancy Alford, the Southeast and South-central District Supervisor of Agriculture Education, arranged the visits for my in Missouri and was my transportation for the week. Later that night I arrived in Mammoth Spring to rest up for the big day ahead.

Tuesday was the first day of visits, with a total of five school stops. I began the day with breakfast and a workshop at Cabool, followed by a workshop at Mountain Grove. We then had pizza at Houston before I presented a workshop. Our next stop of the day was at Licking, where I spoke to their entire FFA chapter, and the final event of the evening was the area leadership conference in Dora. Even though we drove all over, I thought there was no way any of the days could be better. Wow, was I wrong!

Wednesday came bright and early, with breakfast and a workshop at Poplar Bluff, home of the mules. After the visit, Bruce Beck, with the Butler County Extension Service, gave me a tour of a rice elevator and a quick education in how to grow rice. Coming from Illinois where corn and soybeans reign supreme, I found rice to be quite interesting. We then made our way Puxico for a workshop, and wrapped up the morning at Dexter,



where I experienced the best barbeque ribs of my life from Hickory Logs. After the Dexter chapter officers and I finished lunch, I spoke to an environmental science class, and headed to Bernie for a workshop with the entire freshman class. The last event for the evening was an area leadership conference in Holcomb, followed by a terrific dinner at Strawberry's. I once again had barbeque! It was another awesome day of visits!

Thursday was my final day of visits, and the first stop was Fredericktown for a workshop. Unfortunately, Tanner Swope, my first volunteer for the day, injured his collarbone attempting to hop over a five dollar bill. Hope you heal soon Tanner! It was then off to Farmington, where I spoke to a group of freshman and presented a workshop. We joined the class and the chapter officers for lunch but had to leave all too soon for Perryville for a workshop with the entire chapter. The final event of the chapter visit tour was the area rituals competition, and I served as the keynote speaker. After the banquet, we drove to St. Louis, where I would fly out of on Friday morning. It was hard for me to believe the



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

week was over. It was without a doubt one of my favorite weeks of the year, as I was able to work with nearly 1000 FFA members and advisors at the chapter level. I expect great things from the FFA members I met along the tour, and know that the FFA is in good hands in Missouri!

Friday, September 30th, signaled the beginning a new trip. A boarded a plane in St. Louis, stopped over in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and arrived in Phoenix, Arizona, home state of Brian Hogue. I joined Brian and his family at his house in Willcox to celebrate Rex Allen Days, a community celebration. The weekend was filled with Indian fry bread, bon fires, Mexican food, croquet, and a rodeo. On Sunday night, we drove back to Phoenix for dinner at Rustler's Roost, and my last week of business and industry visits.

Monday and Tuesday were spent in Phoenix, visiting former National FFA Foundation Sponsors Board members, current supporters, the Gilbert FFA chapter, and former national officers. One of the most interesting visits we had was with Ken Johnson, a supporter of the FFA. He shows up every year at the Arizona State Leadership Conference in his official dress, the same attire he wore for our visit. As he sat next to me in his blue corduroy jacket, it was amazing to see how much the jacket can impact an individual.

We caught a 6:00 a.m. flight from Phoenix to Denver, Colorado, on Wednesday, October 5th, to finish up the week. This was the first time I had actually been to Denver and not just passing through the airport, and I fell in love with the city on our first visit of the day. Over the next three days, we had visits with Five Rivers Cattle Feeding, the vice



chairman of the Colorado Rockies, former Sponsors Board members, and past national officers. On Thursday evening, we joined John Rakestraw, last year's chairman of the National FFA Sponsors Board for dinner along with the chapter officers from the St. Vrain Valley FFA chapter. The next morning, we rejoined the officers at school for a workshop with members of the chapter. After the visit, it was hard for Brian and I to believe that our final workshop as national officers was over!

Friday evening found us back in Denver airport, and Brian and I flew back to our homes for the weekend. On the way home, I thought back on the past two weeks, and realized just how hectic they were. However, I couldn't think of any better way to spend my final two weeks as an officer on the road!

Basketball games are often won or lost in the fourth quarter. Just like Larry Bird claimed, you must continue to push yourself for more. Looking back over the past two months, I realized that I am now in the "fourth quarter" of my officer year. Luckily for me, this is not the first time I have ever been in a fourth quarter situation. How do you handle crunch time? No matter how much is left, we must continue to push ourselves for more if we truly want success!



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

September 26, 2005

Map out your future - but do it in pencil. The road ahead is as long as you make it. Make it worth the trip.

-Jon Bon Jovi

After arriving in Indianapolis on Saturday, September 10th, I spent seven days working on convention items at the National FFA Center. All week, our focus was on making our time in Louisville an excellent experience for all. Friday night came, and I said goodbye to the team, and boarded a plane to Hartford, Connecticut, to attend the Big E!



The Eastern State Exposition is held every year in Springfield, Massachusetts. It serves as a "state fair" for all the New England states. I had heard all about the fair, but had never attended before, so I was excited about the opportunity. Saturday, September 16th, was FFA Day at the Big E. The morning started off with regional competitions for FFA members in the Eastern Region. Candace from Pennsylvania, Christina from Delaware, and Nickolas from Connecticut were the interns at the Big E this year, and they helped me get acquainted with the fairgrounds. The competitions ranged from horticulture to dairy judging, and even included a Stars Contest. Most of the teams present were the second place team at the state level, but there was no doubt they were top caliber competitors! At noon, I emceed the Stars Luncheon, and was amazed to learn about the Supervised Agricultural Experience programs each of the participants maintained. Following the luncheon, I toured the fairgrounds with a few of the Delaware FFA state officers. The highlight of the trip was the state houses. Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island each have a replica of their respective state capital building within the fairgrounds. In each of the buildings, the state showcases food and products that are produced within its borders. As I made my way through, I ate blueberry pie from New Hampshire, PEZ candy from Connecticut, and maple cotton candy from Vermont before filling up to the point I had no room for the other states. Not only was the food great, but how many times can I say that I was in six states in less than thirty minutes!

That afternoon, I found myself standing in the middle of a huge circus tent. Luckily, I was not trying to tame any tigers or eat fire; I was instead announcing the winners during the Star Awards Ceremony. I was joined on the center stage by FFA members carrying the state flags from the eighteen states in the Eastern region. I was proud of all the FFA members in attendance for their accomplishments and their ability to withstand the extreme heat of the tent! After the Stars Ceremony, I headed back to the hotel for the final event of the evening, the FFA Awards Banquet. At the banquet, each of the competition winners were announced, and the sweepstakes award was presented to



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

Ohio. It was amazing to see over 700 FFA members, advisors, parents, and guests, joining together in fellowship all because of the FFA. I enjoyed seeing friends I had made during the year at the Big E. I left knowing that even though some people went home with a plaque and some did not, we all are winners because of our time wearing the blue corduroy.

The next morning I flew back to Indianapolis, hopped in my Explorer, and drove home with a quick stop by the University of Illinois to see some friends. I was back home for three days, to prepare for my next couple weeks on the road. I played basketball, and unfortunately picked up a nasty sinus infection too! On Thursday, September, 22nd, I left home (with some sinus medicine!) en route to Murray, Kentucky, to attend the Murray State Racer Roundup. I landed in Paducah, Kentucky, rented a Grand Am, and drove to a BBQ held by the Murray State Collegiate FFA officer team. At the dinner, nearly 150 FFA members from all across the state had already shown up for Racer Roundup, which started Friday morning. Before hitting the hay, I joined Whitney and Melissa, two former FFA members from Illinois and good friends, at the apartment for punch and pie with the officer team.



Friday morning signaled the beginning of the Racer Roundup, but before it started, I had a radio interview with Whitney on a local morning show. The show was broadcast from booth at a local diner. It proved to be the first time I had ever done a radio interview and been able to order scrambled eggs simultaneously! After the interview, it was back to campus to join over 300 FFA members for the main event. We kicked off the morning with a welcome from the Dr. Tony Brannon, Dean of Agriculture at Murray State and Marla Smith, the Murray State Collegiate FFA president, then went into our workshops.



After five rotations, we broke for lunch, and then went back for the final five rounds of workshops. The day flew by, and I had a blast meeting and working with Kentucky and Tennessee FFA members. Later that afternoon, I said goodbye to my friends at Murray State, and drove to Memphis, Tennessee, for the weekend and to attend the Mid-South Fair. While in Memphis, I managed to eat barbeque for nearly every meal, my favorite being Corky's.

The past two weeks seemed crazy at times, but memories were made that I will never forget!

We all have a roadmap that we follow in life, some with specific routes and details, and others with wide open spaces. We often get so focused on our destination that we forget to look back and see how much our paths have changed. As I look back on the year, I



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

realize that my map has been expanded, as I have traveled to places I never thought I would. Think about where your roadmap has taken you, and where your destination is!

September 12, 2005

Seeds of Hope

-Rebuilding effort for agricultural education and FFA programs

After spending the weekend in Nashville, Emily Horton and I were joined by FFA members from Turner Ashby FFA chapter in Virginia for FFA Live! on RFD-TV on Monday, August 29th. Every two months, the FFA has a special program that is hosted by Orion Samuelson. The members that joined us were part of the Chesapeake Bay Expedition. On the thirty-day expedition, members from the chapter tested water quality and recorded their measurements. We had a blast with Curt Newsome and Justin Powers, two Turner Ashby FFA members, during the telecast and later eating together at the Rainforest Café. We also knew a stop to Bass Pro Shop was necessary, where Justin showed us his shooting talents and Curt taught us how to putt.



Tuesday morning came, and after some flight delays due to the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I was able to make it home. For the next ten days, I would be at home preparing for national convention and my travel yet to come. Of course, I did manage to find some time to have fun, including playing basketball, shooting skeet, watching high school football, and boating on the river with my sister. Even though it seemed short, my time at home gave me a great boost for the last leg of my officer year.

Once Saturday, September 10th, rolled around, I was off again, this time to the National FFA Center in Indianapolis. The entire team met to work on national convention tasks for the next nine days. We edited scripts, wrote retiring addresses, and began to put all the pieces of convention together. The year has flown by, and it is hard to believe national convention is just around the corner!

Hurricane Katrina impacted the lives of many FFA members. For some, it destroyed their home or school, in an instant taking everything from them. Others it forced to relocate to a new location, in hopes to create a home. There was no doubt that some of our fellow FFA members were in dire need, and it has been amazing to hear the stories of how other members from across the national have not only helped provide relief, but more importantly help rebuild in the aftermath of the hurricane. FFA members from across the nation helped to plant the seeds that will give hope to those that were affected.



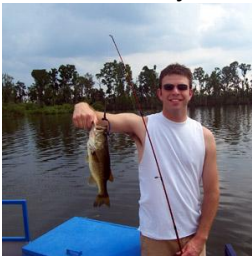
Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

August 29, 2005

Success depends on the support of other people. The only hurdle between you and what you want to be in is the support of other people.

-David Joseph Schwartz

On Saturday, August 13, the team was ready to take-off. Our destination this time was Orlando, Florida. When we arrived in Florida, we headed to the Florida FFA Camp and spent the rest of our evening with the Made For Excellence presenters. The next morning was our first big event of the retreat, an airboat ride with Captain Fred. As we searched for alligators (which we did not see!), he gave each of us an opportunity to drive the boat. It was a huge rush as we flew on top of the water, making spinning stops on a dime! That afternoon, the entire team headed to the lake for a fishing expedition. I was extremely excited about the trip, and tried my best to act like a Bass Pro. The fish



were not biting a whole lot that afternoon (probably because it was well over a hundred degrees), but I did manage to snag myself a nice large-mouth bass. After we docked, we drove to dinner because there was no way we were going to be able to eat from the one and only fish we caught. The establishment we traveled to that evening is called Cherry Pocket's, and serves as a great definition of a "hole in the wall" place! Before crashing for the night, we watched a movie as a team.

Monday morning rolled around, and our first duty of the day was to plan our trips to Disney World. Emily, Rachael, and Justine were in charge of EPCOT and Magic Kingdom, while Brian, Jackie, and I tackled MGM Studios. After resting that afternoon, we enjoyed a dinner cruise, sand volleyball, and swimming. We returned back to the FFA Camp to play games, which the males were sadly beaten. It was off to bed with dreams of Disney the next day!

When Tuesday came, I was about as excited as I can get. My first true family vacation was to Disney World, and it has become one of my favorite places in the world. We spent the entire day at MGM Studios, riding my favorite rides including Star Tours, Muppets 3D, and the Rock N Rollercoaster. That night we checked into our hotel, the Gaylord Resort. The hotel itself was huge, and we took advantage of the two outdoor pools before preparing for the next day at Disney.

The next morning started bright and early at the Magic Kingdom. We hit Space Mountain, Pirates of the Caribbean, and of course, It's a Small World. That afternoon we rode the Monorail to EPCOT to spend time riding Mission: Space, Test Track, and Honey I Shrunk the Audience. The girls planned a special dinner for us at Morocco, which included belly dancers and some of the best kabobs I have ever ate! The final event of the night was Illuminations, the most impressive fireworks show I have seen.



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal



We woke up on Thursday to head back home for a few days. I will never forget the memories we made on the team retreat, and it was awesome to see how much we had grown as a team since the beginning of the year. Once I arrived home, my focus for the weekend was my friend Danny's wedding, which I was the best man. But just as quickly as I arrived, it was time again to head back out on the road; my stating destination was New York City. On Sunday night, I joined Emily at our hotel in Times Square for a week of Business and Industry visits. To kick the week of right, our first meal was at Hard Rock Café on Times Square! With this being my first trip to the Big Apple, I knew it was going to be a terrific trip.

Monday, August 22: the Golden Birthday! I never would have imagined I would spend my 22nd birthday in New York City. We began the day by visiting Ground Zero before our visits. It was a reflective feeling knowing that the World Trade Center stood tall in the area that is now a massive crater. Our first official visit of the day was with the Stock Market Game in lower Manhattan. We then traveled by subway to Midtown for a lunch visit with Pfizer Animal Health. Our final visit was with Mitsui, the Japanese company that sponsors the national officer trip to Japan. For dinner than evening, we ate at Tavern on the Green, the only restaurant in Central Park. The food was excellent, but the park itself was even better. We decided to do something special for my birthday that evening, and headed to Broadway to see Movin' Out. This musical was written by Billy Joel, one of my favorite musicians. The musical was simply awesome, and afterward we sent the rest of the night walking around Times Square before going to bed. It was a birthday I will never forget!



The next morning began with a trip to the Girl Scouts headquarters. We then made our way back to the hotel and drove into New Jersey to visit Masterfoods USA, the manufactures of all Mars brand candy. It was as if we had gone to heaven, as we sampled nearly every type of candy imaginable. Our final sponsor for the day was American Business Media. Because Emily and I decided that no trip to New York was complete without a stop to the Empire State Building, we rode the elevators to catch a quick glimpse of the island from the top. We were not able to stay long at the top because we were heading back to Broadway to see the award-winning show, Fiddler on the Roof. Although it was very different than Movin' Out, Fiddler on the Roof is an impressive classic! That night we enjoyed dinner in Little Italy, the Italian sector of the island. For my first trip to New York, I do not know how it could have been much better!



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

Wednesday morning found us in a familiar place – an airport! We were off to Memphis to meet with Helena Chemical, a scholarship and proficiency sponsor. After the visit, we toured Memphis, visiting landmarks such as Graceland. I doubt if I will ever be able to say again that within twenty-four hours I stood on the top of the empire State Building and in front of Graceland. After the visit, we boarded another airplane, with the destination being Atlanta.

Thursday we were joined by Meredith Stovall, North Region Vice President from Georgia for our visits. We started the morning at Goldkist, a major player in the poultry industry. Our next stop was Phibro Animal Health, a leader in animal nutrition and vaccinations. We then visited NAPA, where we discussed their role in agricultural mechanics supply, as well as our experience the NASCAR race earlier in the month. Our final visit of the day was with the US Poultry and Egg Association. This group helps all companies involved in the poultry industry. After a fun and hectic day, we celebrated with a dinner at a Brazilian steakhouse.

Friday was our final day in Georgia, and we had only one visit scheduled. This time we were headed to the offices of Merial, a leader in the animal health industry. After the visit, Emily and I said goodbye to Georgia and headed to Nashville, Tennessee, for the weekend. During the weekend, we toured the downtown area, ate at the Old Spaghetti Factory, and worked on National Convention tasks. The past two weeks were very busy, but I had a blast and realized that my time as an officer is drawing nearer to an end.

It is amazing to think of how far we have come in our lives because of the support around us. The past two weeks, I have experienced the support of teammates, FFA staff, and sponsors that believe in the organization. It may come from your friends, parents, or FFA advisor, but we often overlook what we have been given by others. Where would we be without support? Take time to thank those that have supported you!

August 15, 2005

In the perspective of every person lies a lens through which we may better understand ourselves.

-Ellen J. Langer

After resting for a day and a half, I drove to the National FFA Center on Tuesday, August 2, to start back on the road. On Wednesday morning, Justine, Brian and I traveled to Erlanger, Kentucky, the home of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, North America (TMMNA). Toyota is a sponsor of FFA, and hosts a group of national officers each year. The first day of the visit was quite different than most business and industry tours we take part in. Rather than go into the company and meet with employees, Toyota set up a day for us with girls from Holly Hill. Holly Hill is an alternative home for high school aged girls.



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

Following an icebreaker at their facilities, we all hoped on a bus en route to King's Island, a Paramount amusement park. As soon as we got off the bus, we broke into our groups and headed towards the rollercoasters. Our group chose to start with a ride called *Son of Beast*, the longest, fastest and scariest coaster in the park. Even though I had a fear of rides that can be described like that, I had no choice whether I was going on it or not. After my group literally dragged me through the line, I was ready to tackle any ride in the park! Evening rolled around, and after a great day at King's Island, we said goodbye to the girls. As we talked as a group that afternoon, I learned of the challenges each of these girls face everyday and the goals they have set for themselves. Often times throughout the year we are ones who are thought to make an impact on others, but I know I walked away from that day knowing those girls had a huge impact on me!

The next morning started bright and early at Northern Kentucky University. FFA members and advisors from Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana joined us and representatives from Toyota for breakfast. Our next stop of the day was at the TMMNA headquarters for meetings with various team members of the company. It was a great opportunity to share the messages of FFA and learn more about the Toyota way. The final event of the visit was a luncheon with the vice presidents and president of TMMNA. While I was sharing my experience from the day before with the girls from Holly Hill, it really hit me lucky we are to have a company such as Toyota believe and support the ideals of FFA. That afternoon we headed back to Indianapolis to meet up with the rest of the team.



Friday, August 5, was a day for us to run errands, catch up on work and plan for our next team activity: we were all going to our first NASCAR race. It was Brickyard 500 weekend in Indianapolis, and there was no way we could stay away! Saturday morning, we started at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway to watch the drivers run qualifying laps and take a tour of the pits. We walked by the

drivers' trailers, the car garages and even caught a glimpse of a few drivers coming off the track. The technology that goes into each car is unbelievable, as a millisecond can mean the difference between first and third place. When you see a race on television, it seems quite simple: stay on the same track, turn left and drive faster than everyone else. All it takes is one look into a driver's garage to realize there is a lot more to it! Later that evening, we travel across town to the Indianapolis Raceway Park for the NASCAR Busch Series race. Before the race, we walked on the track and checked out each of the cars in the race. Once the race began, we headed to pit row to watch. Unfortunately, it began to rain and the race was delayed. Before the rain hit, we had a blast watching each car make its move toward the front. You could feel the cars as they blazed around



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

each turn as if they were about to lose control. Just after one race, I can understand how the sport becomes addictive!

Once Sunday rolled around, it was time to get to business. Our focus for the next five days would be on the national FFA convention. It amazing to learn how much work from so many people goes into making convention successful. Our responsibilities for the week included music, pictures, session scripts, and retiring addresses. Those five days were busy, but we know it will pay off come October. On Saturday, August 13, we said goodbye once again to the FFA staff in Indianapolis, and headed to Orlando, Florida, for our surprise team retreat!

Following our visit to Holly Hill, I realized how much we can learn from another person's perspective. It is easy to get caught in believing the world revolves around our life, but in reality it never does. We are quick to complain, probably wanting more than we deserve. It isn't until we can view life from another's perspective that we realize we are extremely fortunate for what we have been given.

August 1, 2005

Cultivate the Experience

-2005 State Presidents' Conference Theme

After spending a couple days at home resting, doing laundry, and catching up with friends, it was off to Washington, D.C., to prepare for State Presidents' Conference, also



known simply as SPC. Every year, the state president and one other fellow officers travel to the conference from all fifty states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The objectives of the five day conference include beginning the National FFA Delegate Process, exchanging views among state associations which leads to developing unity at the national level, meet with state and national public officials, and explore the heritage of our nation's capital. Upon the return to their home states, the pair of officers is challenged to inform their teammates of the events and information shared at the

conference, as it is an opportunity to grow as a team. After four NLCSO presentations, it was a chance for me to see some familiar faces. As national officers, SPC is a special conference because our parents joined us for the event. My mother had seen Washington from a bus while in college, and my father had not been to the capital since the year he attend SPC as a state officer. A tough part about being a national officer is the limited time you are able to spend with your parents while traveling. I knew that SPC would be a great experience for all of us!

We once again joined up as a team on Thursday, July 21, to prepare for the conference. The next four days were filled with work, but as always, we managed to find time for fun!



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

To kick off the conference, we created a video highlighting the locations and events during the five days. Serving as the driver of a fifteen passenger van around Washington as we ran from sight to sight shooting video footage was a true educational experience for me! Who knew parking a van that large in a busy city during the day would be so fun? On Sunday, July 24, we celebrated Jackie Mundt's birthday with a trip to the Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts. There we enjoyed a picnic dinner and the play *Peter Pan*. It seemed as though time flew, as Tuesday rolled around almost too quickly!

Once everyone had arrived and registered on Tuesday, July 26, the conference had begun. After an overview of the week, we jumped on our busses and traveled to the United States Marine Corp War Memorial to watch the Sunset Parade. The parade was made up of various Marine units that performed honorary ceremonies. It was an unbelievable sight as we watched the soldiers in perfect sync and full military dress, even though it was well over ninety degrees! Following the parade, dinner was served at the Fort Myers Officer Club before we returned to the memorial for reflections. Our final stop was the Omni Shoreham Hotel, our home for the conference.

Wednesday morning came quite early, as our destination after breakfast was Arlington Cemetery. Brian, Emily, Rachael, and Emily laid a memorial wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as the entire conference watched. As the temperature rose to over one hundred degrees, the blue jackets quickly became warm. But throughout the ceremony, it was impressive to see everyone stand poised in official dress. Our next stop of the day



was the Native American Museum for lunch before returning to the hotel. The afternoon was filled with delegate work, congressional visit preparation, and messages from the sponsors of SPC, Chevrolet and GMAC. Following dinner, we jumped on the buses for a night tour of the city, which included stops at the White House, Lincoln Memorial, World War II Memorial, Washington Monument, Vietnam Memorial, and Korean Memorial before arriving at our reflections location, the Jefferson Memorial. Reflections served as a great closure to the day, and it was off to bed after a packed day.

Our first stop on Thursday was the United State Department of Agriculture, where we had the opportunity to meet and hear from Secretary of agriculture Mike Johanns. We also attend break our sessions that focused on a specific area within the department. After saying goodbye at the USDA, we made our way back to the White House for a visit with President George W. Bush. The excitement was overwhelming as we walked into the White House and waited for the President in the State Dining Room. As the President walked in, he shook hands with the officer team, and then addressed the entire group. "Have any of you asked the President of the United States a question before?," he surveyed the group. After a unanimous answer of nay, the President



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

followed by saying, "well would anyone like to ask me a question?" For nearly the next twenty minutes, the President fielded questions from the group that ranged from a description of his ranch to the events that shaped his life. As I sat and listened in awe, it was nearly impossible for me to fathom that the President of the United States, the leader of our nation, was shooting from the hip, giving us an inside look at the true person he is. It was without a doubt an experience that's impact is difficult to put into words! The rest of the day was filled with delegate work, and we once again ended the evening with reflections on the Capitol Lawn.

On Friday morning, we split into our states for congressional visits on the capital. This was an opportunity for state officers to share updates with legislators from their states on FFA and agricultural education. After lunch, it was another afternoon focused on delegate work, which was wrapped up later that evening. Following the finale of delegate work, a banquet was held at the hotel in which former FFA members from the area gathered. After the banquet, we danced the night away until reflections wrapped up that day. At reflections we were joined by a special guest and former FFA member, Sergeant Ryan Ball. He shared with us his duties and requirements as a guard of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He stated that FFA had a significant impact on his ability to be a guard. A great way to end the day!

The final day of the conference was upon us, but the fun was not over yet. After a few workshops in the morning, everyone had four free hours to spend seeing more of the capital. The surprise of the conference came that evening, as the entire group went to Six Flags for dinner and of course, rollercoaster. I put my fear of rollercoaster aside that night, and I am proud to say that I rode the second rollercoaster in my lifetime at SPC! After a fun night at Six Flags, we traveled back to the city to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial for the final reflections. At the end of reflections, we said our goodbyes, and the conference came to a close. A huge thank you goes out to Tiffany Sanderson, Phyllis McDonald, Stacia Berry, Seth Derner, the delegate coordinators, and the state officers for making SPC 2005 a great experience!

As always, I found myself Sunday morning on a plane back to Illinois, reflecting on the experiences of the past two weeks.

When spring arrives, the farmer gets ready for a new cycle of agriculture. The process is always the same, with the major steps of planting, growing and finally, harvesting. Each step has variables that can impact the outcome of the harvest. But before the harvest, growing, or even planting can occur, the farmer must cultivate the land. This prepares the field for the new season and sets the stage for plant growth. Cultivation is a critical step in the process of farming. Think of how you cultivate the experiences in your life. Do you prepare yourself and others for success? Do you take advantage of the opportunity to grow? Cultivate each experience in your life so that you may harvest your full potential!

July 18, 2005



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

Who shall set a limit to the influence of a human being?

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

July 3 was the kickoff for the Four Corners NLC SO, which included state officers from Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Arizona and Colorado. The conference was held at Bryce Canyon Resort and Inn, located north of the Grand Canyon. Bryce Canyon serves as the uppermost canyon in the chain, which includes the Grand Canyon. Over the years, wind has blown through the canyon, creating spindles and archways in the red rock. As if a painter created the portrait, Bryce Canyon is an amazing sight to see!

The conference ran from the 3 through the 7, which was longer than any other NLC SO we attended. Our evenings were filled with activities that included fireworks on the 4, a walking tour of the canyon, and a conference banquet. We also attended a rodeo at which a few state officers from Utah and Arizona participated. With only one broken arm and a banged up shoulder, I would consider it a win for Team FFA! As with past NLC SO's, the focus was on team performance, workshop development, and relationship building. This was are largest NLC SO with forty state officers. After spending five days together, there is no doubt in my mind that each of these states will be served well by their state officers this year.

After packing up our supplies on the afternoon of Thursday, July 7, we made our way back towards civilization for an early morning flight on Friday. Our destination on Friday



was Myrtle Beach, S.C., home of our fourth and final NLC SO. But before we arrived at Myrtle Beach from Bryce Canyon, we made stops in Salt Lake City and Atlanta. The hotel where the conference was being held was on the beach, and the room I stayed in overlooked the ocean.

After a day of setup, the conference began on the July 10 and ran through July 13. With only twenty state officers from South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia, it was the smallest NLC SO we presented.

The four days we spent together were filled with learning, growth, and even a little fun. One evening the entire group went to Dixie Stampede, a dinner theater that pits the north versus the south in a horse arena. During parts of the show, they pull participants from the crowd to earn points for their side, mine of which happened to be the south the night! It must have been our lucky night, as both Justine and I were selected to barrel race horses against the opposing side. After some minor humiliation in front of the entire arena, Justine and I raced to victory to earn a point for the south. Although this sounds like quite a feat, especially for someone who has only rode one horse in my life, the racing occurred on stick horses, not the real thing!



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

July 13 rolled around too quickly, and we had to once again say goodbye (as well as tell everyone at the conference I was NOT a hand model after Justine convinced them I was) to the state officer teams and to NLC SO (and the tight flight suits that came with the conference). It was hard to believe that almost four weeks ago we started in



Nebraska at our first NLC SO. These conferences have been one of the most rewarding events of the year, as working with state officers is an opportunity that not everyone has. A thank you goes out to all the state officers, state staff, and National FFA Staff that made NLC SO a success and created memories that will last a lifetime! After working with state officers from sixteen states, I know the future of the FFA is in good hands.

On the morning on Thursday, July 14, we flew from Myrtle Beach to Atlanta before arriving in Indianapolis for the July National FFA Board of Directors Meeting. It had been nearly two months since we had been together as a team, so the stories were nearly endless! Saturday morning marked the beginning of the board meeting, and for the next three days we would discuss items of business that affect the future of the organization. During lunch on Monday, our team had the opportunity to talk with FFA members from Turner Ashby High School in Rockingham County, Virginia, on their thirty day expedition of the Chesapeake Bay. What an awesome experience for those members as they traveled from the Potomac River basin to the Chesapeake Bay! After participating in two board meetings, I am still amazed by the commitment towards the betterment of agriculture education by the members of the board. The meeting concluded Monday afternoon, and Tuesday morning found me on familiar roads to home after thirty-two days on the road.

Often times we do not realize the influence we have on others around us. Working with state officers the past few weeks reminded me of the potential to bring out the best in others. No matter what level - chapter, state, or even national - we are shaped by those around us. One would think that I influenced *state officers*, but it happens to be a two way street. Think about the influence you have on others, whether it be fellow FFA members, friends, or family. Does it match the influence they have on you? Be the influence that you wish to see in others!

July 4, 2005

Dare to Soar
-2005 NLC SO Theme



After the Illinois State Convention, I spent a day at home preparing for NLC SO (National Leadership Conference for State Officers). NLC SO is a conference for state officer teams that focuses on three primary development objectives: team



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

performance, workshop development, and relationship building. The format of the conference came in three types of sessions: team performance sessions, which focused on project development; team debrief sessions, which took an in-depth look at the barriers to team development; and leadership summits, which provided officers knowledge on the agriculture industry, agriculture education, National FFA Delegate Process, and state issues. Eleven conferences are presented all across the nation, with Justine and I presenting four. Not only is it a chance to travel to some unique areas, it also is an awesome opportunity to work side by side with state officers.

Saturday, June 18, I flew into Lincoln, Nebraska, to meet Justine at our first conference. We headed to Aurora on Sunday to setup the first conference we would present. Sunday was also a special day because it was Justine's birthday. Monday was another day of setup, and the conference kicked off on Tuesday. For the next three days, we would work with thirty three state officers from Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota and South Dakota on implementing projects throughout the year and team development. We had a blast getting to know the officers and watching their teams grow. Some of the highlights included the dodgeball world championship, flag raising by state officers, and watching the impact the conference had on an officer for the first time.

The conference wrapped up on Friday, June 24, and we enjoyed the weekend in Lincoln, Neb. Sunday evening we were off again, this time to Paris, Tenn. We flew into Nashville, then had a road trip through what seemed like the middle of nowhere to Paris Landing and Resort on Kentucky Lake. The conference did not begin until Wednesday, so we enjoyed the sights and sounds of the area. Being from Illinois, I do not have sweet tea very often, so it becomes a highlight for me when I head south! I also enjoyed the catfish and barbeque during our daily trips to Murray, Ky. After setting up for two days, the conference began. Thirty four state officers from Tennessee, Kentucky, Michigan and Florida joined us in Paris for the three day conference. Although we were packed into a small room, we still managed to have fun and prepare for the year ahead. A highlight of the conference was the reflections given by the state officers. Two officers from each state provided a message on the value of time, especially during the year as an officer. At the end of the conference, we were very proud of each team!

On Friday, July 1, the conference wrapped up, and we made the trip back to Nashville. The next day started early, as we flew from Nashville to Las Vegas all before noon. Once arriving in Las Vegas, we took a drive down The Strip, grabbed burgers at *In And Out*, and then drove four hours to Bryce Canyon, Utah. As we drove up the mountains in our four cylinder car, I could not believe we had been to five states in less than twelve hours and would be gearing up for the Four Corners NLCSO in the morning! The difference between *soaring* and simply *flying* is huge! Soaring is when you reach new heights and challenge your ability to go farther. Think of it in terms of an eagle. Whereas other birds just fly from place to place, an eagle soars above the land with a obvious presence. When we choose to soar rather than just fly, we push ourselves and our potential. Have you made the commitment to soar in life, or are you just simply flying?



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

June 20, 2005

A moment lasts all of a second, but the memory lives on forever.
-Anonymous



On Sunday, June 5th, I left Connecticut and headed across the country to New Mexico. I landed in El Paso, TX, and rode up to New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. I spent the afternoon with the state officers, the state officer candidates, and the nominating committee. I received the grand tour of campus and saw other highlights of Las Cruces including the Rio Grande. After that experience, I had no doubt there was a great convention on its way.

Monday rolled around, and members from all across the state began showing up. In the morning, the state officer candidates and I played games between interviews and shared our embarrassing FFA stories. The state officers wanted to make sure that I ate a true Mexican meal while I was in town, so we went to a local establishment for lunch. Because I have a weak stomach, I was nervous as to what they may make me eat. Much to my surprise, the food was great! Everyone had a few laughs while responding to my numerous questions about what they were eating as well. After the meal, we headed back to the Corbett Center for the evening activities. One of the highlights of the evening was the state talent preliminaries. Participants put on a concert for the audience as they vied for a spot on stage during the conventions sessions. They did a great job, and the audience went crazy! Later that evening, Jonathan Walsh, Kolbyn and Stuart Joy, and a few other past state officers drove me past White Sands National Park. The park is located near an Air Force missile range, but we did not see any explosions that night. I wanted to be able to say that I at least saw the park, which is acres upon acres of pure white sand in the middle of nowhere. No one knows exactly how it the sand appeared, but the story I am sticking to is that the dinosaurs made it to use as a sandbox!

Tuesday morning kicked off the beginning of the convention. The students that attended my workshop that morning were awesome! We had a blast discussing how to become goal getters. A big thanks goes out to the members from Texico FFA, Silver City FFA, and all the other members in attendance. You guys rock! After the workshop, I joined Hannah and Sally from the Clayton FFA for lunch before the first general session. During the afternoon session, Ruben Trujillo and Jamie Gerard did an excellent job delivering their retiring address on dreams. That night, the officer team presented their vespers on what's right with this world. The vespers were terrific, and I have no doubt the officers had an impact on quite a few members that evening. After vespers, it was off to El Paso to catch a flight in the morning. As we drove to El Paso, I reflected back on the great three days spent in New Mexico. Jamie, Jessica, Ginger, Christopher, Caleb, Clifton, and Ruben were simply outstanding at convention, but after meeting the candidates for



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

state office, I know that New Mexico FFA is in good hands for the next year. I had a blast in New Mexico, and the members I met from chapters such as Corona and Astoria made me wish could stay for the entire convention.

On Wednesday, June 8th, I caught an early morning flight to Arkansas to attend the Arkansas FFA State Convention. After arriving in Little Rock, I headed to Camp Couchdale, the Arkansas FFA campgrounds. I arrived just as the first session was about to begin, and was blown away by the excitement in MDF Leadership Center. During the first session, Monica Coker presented her retiring address entitled *Let's Get Fired Up!* At the end of the session, the state officer candidates answered questions on stage for the delegate body. Even under pressure, each of them stepped up to the challenge and nailed the questions. After dinner, the second session began, and Dru Glaze gave her retiring address. As she talked about the ride of our life, it brought back some great FFA memories for me. The final event of the evening was the Parliamentary Procedure CDE. At the event, I sat with members from the Springdale FFA Chapter that I met earlier in the year. We had a blast telling stories and watching the teams compete.



Thursday morning began bright and early with my workshop. I was extremely impressed with the members that attended, because even though it was early in the day, the enthusiasm was still very high! As we took a look at goals, it was satisfying to see members setting high level goals. After the workshop, we all made our way over to the MDF Leadership Center for the sessions. During the first session, John Crangle's retiring address entitled *Somewhere I Belong* reminded students of the camaraderie we share though FFA. A highlight of the afternoon session was the retiring address of Amber Usdrowski, which was titled *Traveling Down the Yellow Brick Road*. All day the excitement was building for a certain event: state and district officer elections. As the delegates voted on the leaders of the state for the upcoming year, there was little doubt that all of the candidates were highly qualified and prepared for a year of service. After the elections, I joined past Arkansas FFA state officers and heard some great stories of the days past. During the evening session, Jason Davis delivered his retiring address entitled *Live Like You Were Dying*. After the session, the chairs were moved to the side and the convention hall became a dance hall. As we danced and sang into the night, it was evident that everyone was having a great time! My time in Arkansas was awesome, and I was impressed by the enthusiasm the members from Ashdown, Camden Fairview, and many others had during convention. All of the hard work and dedication Casey, Monica, Jason, Dru, John, and Amber poured into convention made the event so great. Thanks for the memories!

After breakfast on Friday morning, it was time once again to take off to a different destination. I was familiar with my destination this time, as I was heading home to attend the Illinois FFA State Convention. After spending a little time at home, I drove down to



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

Springfield on Monday morning to help the state officers prepare for the event. Driving down to Springfield and walking into the convention hall brought back some great memories of my days with the Princeville FFA. I spent the afternoon hanging out with the section presidents and helping the state officers.



Tuesday, June 14, was the first day of the convention. As members arrived, I saw many old faces! During the first session, I presented my keynote address. Before I walked on stage, I thought back to my retiring address as a state officer, and all I could do was smile. At the end of the session, the state officers presented reflections based upon the theme, *The Magic Formula*. After the session, I joined the state officers for the Foundation Awards Banquet. At the banquet, American degree recipients, proficiency award winners, and sponsors were recognized for the hard work. During the evening session, Rich Chapple presented his retiring address entitled *Learn To Fly*. After the session, I caught up with a few of my state officer teammates as well as other past officers as we reminisced about our experiences as officers.

On Wednesday morning, while I was presenting my workshop, Shana Stine gave her retiring address, *Sign Here*. Even though the room my workshop was in was a bit crammed, we still had a blast together! During the Leadership Luncheon, I had a chance to catch up with Mr. Doug Loudenslager, the COO of the National FFA Organization. Mr. Loudenslager has served as my mentor for the year, and due to our busy schedules, finding time to talk is not always easy. With him graduating from Ohio State University, we made sure and welcomed him to Illini Country appropriately! After the luncheon, it was back to the Prairie Capital Convention Center for the fourth general session. During the session, Becky Littlefield presented her retiring address, *Hoop Dreams*. In the following delegate session, the state officer candidates responded to their impromptu question on stage. After the impromptu question, I headed over to the past officer reception. While I was there, I met up with my teammates and saw many good friends. That evening, the stage was set for the election for the new state officers. As I watched the election with my advisor and a few other close friends, it brought back memories of the day I was on that stage awaiting the results. Even though not every one of the candidates was elected at the end of the night, there is no doubt in my mind that they all won. Congratulations to all of the candidates for their dedication to the members of the Illinois FFA!

Similar to Wednesday, I presented my workshop again on Thursday morning while Cliff Dolbeare presented his retiring address titled *Don't Go Too Big*. Once again, a great audience was in attendance for my workshop! After the session, I joined the current and new state officers for a meal with a special guest, Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns. Secretary Johanns spoke during the final session of the convention, in which he provided his thoughts on the new farm bill. It was an honor to have him at convention,



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

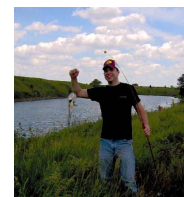
and the members in attendance appreciated his remarks. After Kacy Bagher gave her retiring address, *Accidentally on Purpose*, the new officers were installed and the convention came to a close. As the retiring team walked offstage, I was so proud of their commitment and hard work throughout the year. I have little doubt that they will be remembered for a long time in Illinois because of the influence they had. The new officers have some big shoes to fill, but I have complete confidence in their ability to set the bar even higher.

As I drove home on Thursday evening, I thought about all the members and advisors I saw during convention. It would be too long for me to list all of them that had an impact on me during my time in FFA, but I am proud to say I am from Illinois because of them. Being at my home convention was a terrific capstone to my state convention tour! During my travels to state conventions, I have made some great memories. As I think back on my FFA career, the memories come flooding back to me. It is hard to believe how those memories have shaped us, because the experiences we have while wearing the blue jacket change us. Going to my home convention for the last time as a member reminded me of some of the lessons I learned during my time in FFA. What are the memories that have shaped you?

June 6, 2005

Every living faith must have within itself the power of rejuvenation if it is to live
-Mahatma Gandhi

After attending the Nebraska COLT conference, I headed home for a short break from my crazy summer schedule. I arrived home on Sunday, May 22, and enjoyed eleven days of fishing, golfing and farming. As you can tell, I left all the big fish in the lake! I appreciated the opportunity to refuel the tanks while I was home, but I was ready to get back on the road. On Friday, June 3, I left Illinois for Hartford Connecticut.



When I arrived in Hartford, I joined the state officers as they set up for their 75th convention. After setting up all afternoon, the officers took me to my first Friendly's experience. For those of you who don't know, Friendly's is a restaurant chain popular in the New England states. That night, we stayed in a bed and breakfast called The Tolland Inn. It reminded me of an old colonial home that I would have seen in history textbooks in school!

On Saturday morning, convention rolled into E.O. Smith High School in Storrs, Connecticut. The school is located next to the University of



Jay Kelley is the eastern region vice president of the 2004-2005



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

Connecticut campus. The day was kicked off by the first session, in which I provided remarks. After the session, students participated in CDE's, committee meetings and my workshop. I had a blast at my workshops hanging out with students from the Southington FFA Chapter. The afternoon was filled with the second session, which included state CDE and proficiency winners, retiring officer addresses and state degree recognition. A congratulation goes to Mindy, Missy, Michelle, Nick, Gina, Kellie and Amy on an awesome convention! It was awesome to see members from Killingly, Woodbury, Storrs Regional and other chapters across the state be rewarded for their hard work and dedication this past year. That evening, I rode with the Suffield Regional FFA chapter on the way to the airport. As I sat next to Sean and Erika, I learned about their school and the opportunities they had in FFA. A few of the members gave me a tour of their brand new school, which included some of the nicest greenhouses I have seen all year. Later that evening, the advisor from the chapter took me to dinner and gave me a quick tour of tobacco production. Even though the convention was only a day, I had a great time and appreciated the knowledge I picked up.

On Sunday morning, I left Hartford, Connecticut, en route for Las Cruces, New Mexico, for the New Mexico FFA State Convention. Same airports, different day!

Every once in a while, we need to do those things in our life that refuel our tanks. It can be as simple as hanging out with friends, playing basketball or farming, but it is those things that can keep us going. When we forget to rejuvenate our bodies and souls, we often find ourselves going through the motions rather than playing at a higher level. What are the activities that refuel your tanks?

May 23, 2005

You can't hit a home run unless you step up to the plate. You can't catch fish unless you put your line in the water. You can't reach your goals if you don't try.

-Anonymous

After a few days at home, it was off to College Station, Texas, home of the Texas A&M Aggies. The entire team was meeting in Texas to rehearse the National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLC SO). I knew that A&M was a huge football school, so I could not wait to learn more about the heritage of the program. This was also my first trip to Texas, which was much warmer than my home state of Illinois. We met up on Sunday, May 8th, and prepared for the ten days ahead.

During our stay in Texas, Justine and I will be partnering up to teach a class for college students. As partners, Justine and I will tackle four NLC SO's this summer as we bounce around the country. We spent the first few days of our time in College Station setting up our room and working with Mark Reardon, a facilitator coach. On Wednesday, I left the rest of the team and headed to Pullman, Washington.



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

I spent Thursday in Pullman at the Washington FFA State Convention. My day started with two workshops on teamwork. The members that were in the workshops were awesome! I was impressed by their enthusiasm, and after attending a convention session, I was not surprised at all. The first session was held in the evening, and the entire arena went crazy! During the session, Carey Smithingell and Greg Reilly presented their retiring addresses, sharing excellent messages of living now and stepping up to the plate. Before the session ended, I provided remarks and saw the excitement of the Washington FFA from the stage. After the session ended, I joined the Washington state officers and the visiting state officers for an ice cream party before retiring for the evening. Even though my stay in Washington was short, I had a blast in Pullman! Thanks for the great experience!

On Friday I flew back to College Station to prepare for the week ahead. Justine and I would be presenting NLCSO to the class starting Saturday and ending Sunday. We were blessed to have a great class that learned with us as we would be presenting the conference for the first time. In the evenings, we hung out as a team and enjoyed the minimal time we had together until we would see each other again in July. On Tuesday, the last day of the conference, we joined the entire class at The Chicken Oil for lunch to celebrate the end of the conference. The time spent at Texas A&M was a growing experience, and I truly appreciate the participation of the college students. Thank you for helping Justine and I make NLCSO better!

Wednesday rolled around, and it was again time to head our separate ways. I was off to Aurora, Nebraska, for the first session of Nebraska COLT Conference where Chapter officers from all over the state join together to learn effective strategies for serving as an officer. The theme for the conference was Mission: Serve, which the state officers brought to life through skits, sessions and reflections. During my stay, I met some amazing chapter officers that will have a huge impact on members this year. Kyle, Laura, Tony, Dillon, Ryan, Rob and Jaci did a terrific job presenting the conference and influencing the members they met. Whether it was reflections, trenchball (which was quite painful!), or the "moonlight voyage," I had a blast at COLT Conference and appreciate the opportunity to be part of the event. After the final session ended, I flew home to Illinois to enjoy a few days of rest.

In Washington, Greg Reilly, the state reporter, challenged members to step up to the plate and play the game. At COLT Conference, the state officers challenged members to step up to the plate by serving others. Justine and I had to step up when it came to presenting NLCSO in Texas. If we do not step up, then we will never have the chance to find success. Stepping up to the plate may mean risking boldly, but the risk is worth the opportunity. When the chance comes to face a challenge, remember the first step is to try!

May 9, 2005



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

I will never put my name on a product that does not have in it, the best that is in me.

-John Deere

On Sunday, April 24, Emily Horton flew into Peoria and we drove to Moline, Illinois, for a meeting with representatives from John Deere. Because we both grew up on farms that use John Deere equipment, we were excited for the chance to visit the world headquarters. For Emily, it was a dream come true, as she is one of the biggest fans of John Deere I have ever met in my life! Joining us in Moline was Carl Horne, a past national vice president of PAS.

The meeting on Monday was an unbelievable experience! To enter the building, the first room a visitor passes through is filled with John Deere tractors and equipment of the past and the future. This room serves as a museum for the roots of John Deere and where the company is today. Mr. Doug DeVries of John Deere serves on the Foundation Sponsors Board and setup our meeting in Moline. As we walked into the main board room, the table seemed as long as a football field with chairs surrounding it that seemed ten feet high. We were told the meetings that happen in that room are important, so we obviously felt honored for the opportunity. As we discussed agricultural education with representatives of all facets of John Deere, it became evident that the company supports us for a reason. They too believe that education goes beyond the classroom, and the agricultural education model serves a model for teaching students life skills needed to succeed. After the meeting in the board room, we descended to the bottom floor of the building to eat lunch by the lake. After lunch, Emily and I headed back to my home to get ready to fly out on Tuesday.

Tuesday morning I again headed back out on the road, but this time it would not be driving. My destination on Tuesday was Fairbanks, Alaska. I started in Peoria, had layovers in Minneapolis and Anchorage, and reached Fairbanks that night. I had never been to Alaska before, and as other places I have never been, I am always excited to visit the first time!

The next day, we finished all of the last minute preparations for the state convention. The first part of convention was held at Chena Hot Springs Resort, Alaska's Premier Destination Location. The resort was built upon a geothermal hot spring, and the resort harnesses the geothermal energy to power various projects. The resort also created a rock pool around one of the hot springs, which supposedly helps cure the body and relieve stress. While members were giving their envirothon speeches, the staff at Chena made home made ice cream. Rather than crank by hand, an old John Deere engine powered the barrels to make the dessert. After members gave their envirothon speeches, we all headed to the rock pool for a little relaxation. Ice cream, a rock pool, and FFA members- what a perfect way to end the day!

On Thursday, the day started with flag raising by the past state officers. The morning and afternoon were filled with the envirothon, as members continued the competition. Before dinner, Mr. Bernie Karl, the owner of Chena Hot Springs, offered us a guided tour of his ice palace. The ice palace, which is housed in a large, curved building, is a hand carved museum complete with a bar, fireplace, igloo and four bedrooms. Ice carvers



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

from across the world are brought in to make the museum come to life. Last year, Forbes Magazine named the museum, "the dumbest business move in the world," but Mr. Karl knows that once you experience the palace, you understand why he created it. After the tour, dinner was served and the opening session was held. During the session, Mr. Karl provided words of motivation as he explained how he helped build Chena Hot Springs into what it is today. Also during the session, each chapter gave a report on the success they had in the past year. After closing ceremonies, we made our way back to Fairbanks for the rest of convention. A highlight of the drive was seeing four moose walking down the road. Talk about a huge animal!

Friday morning began with a flag raising again by the state officers, followed by the second session of convention. During the session, Tim Walsworth gave his retiring address on "The Masks that We Wear." After eating lunch, the extemporaneous and prepared speaking events took place, followed by Crystal Krause's retiring address, titled "Find Your Path." In the evening session, state degrees were awarded and Colleen Fisk gave her retiring address, "Courage." After the session, I presented a workshop to the students. We had a blast talking about goals and discovering how success happens. Reflecting back, it was another great day!

The next morning started with flag raising by chapter advisors. During the morning session, Theresa Feighery presented her retiring address, "Brick by Brick." After lunch, Brandon Borchers, a state officer from Washington, presented a workshop on success. After the workshop, the entire convention headed to the Gold Dredge for the banquet. During the banquet, CDE results were announced, I served as a keynote speaker, and Jessica Nolin presented her retiring address, "Life's a Bank." At the end of the banquet, the new state officers were installed, and the past officers were congratulated on a terrific year. As the banquet came to a close I thought about all the fun times I had with members from Palmer, Ninilchik, Homer, North Pole, and Fairbanks FFA Chapters. On Sunday, we headed to North Pole to visit none other than Santa. Unfortunately, Santa was on vacation in a warmer destination, so we had to settle for some reindeer. After the visit, we cooked hot dogs and drove ATV's at a member's house before sightseeing an abandon gold dredge. As I thought back on the week, I once again realized my time in Alaska was awesome. Alaska FFA, thanks for all the memories! The next morning, I flew back to Illinois to rest up for the next trip on the road.

When we wear our FFA jackets it seems like the best of us comes out. While I was in Alaska, I saw the best in students as we went through the week. Just like John Deere, when our names are on the blue jackets, it means that we are dedicated to being our best in FFA. Is our finest only shown as we wear the jacket? Show the best in yourself everyday, because you name is always on it!

April 25, 2005

FFA...Powered by Corduroy

-Iowa FFA Leadership Conference Theme



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

After having a blast in Montana, I spent the beginning of the next week at home preparing for the weeks ahead. On Thursday, April 15th, I flew from home to Starkville, Mississippi for the Mississippi State Contests. It was my first trip to Mississippi, and I was excited to visit the campus of the Mississippi State University Bulldogs. As I spent the afternoon and evening with the state officers, I was impressed by their dedication to their position and the enthusiasm they had for the FFA.

On Friday, chapters from all over the state rolled into Starkville for the event. Members competing in skill CDE's such as livestock evaluations, horse evaluation, and floriculture. While the students were judging, I ran around with the state officers helping with the event. After three trips to Wal-Mart and an extensive tour of campus, everything was in place. When the competing ended, members attended an awards banquet to find out the results. As the winners were announced, I enjoyed seeing the excitement in the faces of the students who had worked hard preparing for the event. To celebrate a successful day, Kristy, Cody, (two current state officers) and I joined Buz (a past state officer) went out for chicken tenders, bowling, billiards, and ice cream. What more could you want! On Saturday, I said goodbye to the officers and headed back to Illinois for a short stay at home.

As Sunday afternoon rolled around, I packed my bags for Iowa to attend the Iowa FFA State Leadership Conference. Due to a flight cancellation, I arrived in Ames late Sunday night. The theme for the convention was "Powered by Corduroy", a true testament to the success of Iowa FFA members I saw during the two day event.

Monday signaled the start of convention, and blue jackets began to flood the campus of Iowa State University. After walking through the career show and meeting members from all corners of the state, I spent the afternoon with the state officer candidates. As I learned about each of them, I began to realize how amazing each of them was. At 4:00 PM, the first general session began. One of the highlights of the session was the keynote speaker, Guy Rice Doud. Doud was a former high school teacher, and he shared the message that each one of us makes an impact. After the first session, we made our way across campus for a BBQ, games, and a dance.

The next day, I presented two workshops in the morning. As we talked about goal setting, I learned that Iowa FFA members dream big! We had an awesome time discuss how we achieve goals in our lives. After the workshops, we made our way to the Toyota Stage to be entertained by a few talented FFA members. We had a blast watching the singers, dancers, CDE winners, and other acts perform in front of a crowd. I spent the rest of the afternoon hanging out with members before the fourth and final session at 4:00 PM. As I watched the state officers present their retiring program and the new officers run across state during elections, I knew that Iowa FFA has and will be in good hands. After the session was over, I joined the past and present state officers for dinner to celebrate a successful convention and the year ahead. Even though the event was only two days long, it was members from chapters like Knoxville, Graettinger-Terril, and Vinton-Shellsburg that helped make it special!

On Wednesday morning, I said goodbye to Ames, Iowa, and said hello to Indianapolis, Indiana. I met Justine in Indy for a meeting of the Local Organizing Committee for the national FFA convention. It was the kick-off meeting for the committee, whose primary



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

role is to help make a smooth transition from Louisville to Indianapolis. After that evening with the committee, Justine and I have no doubt that convention in Indy will be awesome!

Thursday afternoon I was again on the road, but this time my destination was home. As we flew through a storm front on a propeller driven plane, I again was reminded why I dislike rollercoaster rides! After surviving my flight home, on Friday night I traveled to the East side of Illinois to attend the Shiloh FFA Chapter Banquet. Led by a strong team of officers, the banquet was a success, as members were rewarded for their accomplishments and a few laughs were shared during the slide show. After the banquet, I spent the weekend at home preparing for the weeks to come.

Corduroy can be stiff, too hot, too cold, and sometimes just not in style. It seems just like any other material, but FFA members know there is something special about the corduroy we wear. When we wear the blue corduroy, we suddenly have the ability to do things we think we cannot do. It is as if we are given special powers. It's like we become a superhero when we wear the jacket. Whether it was seeing students win state CDE's, officers elected at convention, supporters willing to sacrifice their time and effort to the National Convention, or chapter members celebrating a year full of accomplishments, the blue jackets powered each of these events. It is true that the FFA is powered by the blue jackets, but more importantly, it is the people that wear those jackets that give the FFA power! How has blue shaped you?

April 11, 2005

You've got to get to the stage in life where going for it is more important than winning or losing.

-Arthur Ashe

After spending Easter with my family, I headed towards Indianapolis on Monday, March 28, for the annual Blue Photo Shoot. For three days, the entire officer team became models for the new FFA merchandise that will be showcased in the Blue catalog later this year. It was fun while it lasted, but I know that my career in the modeling field looks quite bleak. After the photo shoot wrapped up on Wednesday, we split up as a team, and my destination for the rest of the week was Northwest Ohio. I joined JR Peterson of the National FFA Foundation in Cleveland on Wednesday night after a six hour delay in Chicago due to thunderstorms. When it isn't snow, I guess it has to be thunderstorms!

During our stay in Ohio, JR and I met with potential sponsors of FFA and visited local FFA chapters. Lee Schroeder, a past national officer, was our host in the Leipsic area. On Thursday, we traveled from Cleveland to Continental to meet with members from the Continental FFA Chapter. After the quick visit, some of the chapter members joined us for a tour of Socar, one of the country's largest manufacturers of clear-span joists and girders. After the tour, we made our way over to Leipsic to visit an Iams Company manufacturing facility. Mr. Don Barnhart, the FFA advisor at Leipsic and to chapter members joined us on our visit. I did not realize the substantial research Iams uses



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

when developing their pet food products. It was very interesting to learn how the proper mix of proteins and vitamins can make a large difference in the growth of animals.

We started Friday morning in Ottawa, Ohio, at the W.C. Wood Company. W.C. Wood is the largest manufacturer of freezers in North America. Our next stop was in Kalida at Unverferth Manufacturing, who specialize in agricultural equipment, including tillage equipment and hopper wagons. Two chapter members from the Kalida FFA Chapter joined us for the visit. Before lunch, the entire group made our way across town to visit Remlinger Manufacturing. Remlinger manufactures minimum till and deep till farm tillage equipment. After lunch, we traveled northeast to Leipsic for Leipsic FFA's Ag Olympics. Students had a blast jumping over gates, pounding nails into boards, cutting boards, and stacking hay, all while racing against the clock. Every student in the school attended the assembly and saw how much fun FFA is at the chapter level. What a great way to end the day!

Saturday night was the Leipsic FFA 50th Anniversary Chapter banquet. Former members from all the years joined together that night to celebrate the success of Leipsic FFA. The officers did an outstanding job at the banquet, and everyone in the audience was proud to be associated with the Leipsic FFA. As if the night could not get any better, after the banquet I found out the University of Illinois Fighting Illini had beaten the Louisville Cardinals for the chance to play in the NCAA men's basketball championship. That evening we drove back to Indianapolis for NLCSO Test Pilot the next morning. We kicked off the NLCSO (National Leadership Conference for State Officers) Test Pilot Sunday afternoon in Indianapolis. The first item on our agenda was logistics for State President's Conference, followed by a training session on Gallop StrengthsFinder. Monday and Tuesday were devoted to the curriculum taught at the ten NLCSO's this summer. A low point in the week occurred on Monday night, when the Fighting Illini were defeated by the Tar Heels of North Carolina for the men's basketball championship. Truly a sad moment for Illinois fans around the world...

On Wednesday, April 6th, I left Indianapolis en route to Bozeman for the Montana 75th State FFA Convention with the theme "Driven by Vision". I had never been to Montana before, which added to my excitement. As I flew in, I peered out my window at the mountains that surrounded Bozeman. The ranges stood like tall fences in the distance, touching the clouds as they passed by. The beauty of the area was nearly breathtaking! The first session signaled the beginning of the convention later that evening.

I presented my first workshop on the second day of convention. At the workshop, nearly one hundred greenhands learned about teamwork. On Thursday afternoon, I spoke to the members during a student success session. After my speech, I joined the Conrad chapter for dinner. Great people and great food always mix! At the evening session, I met members from the Wibeux FFA and the Joliet FFA and together we helped celebrate Montana FFA success.



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

The second workshop I presented was on Friday. As we talked about goal setting, I saw the amazing amount of potential Montana FFA members possess. I attended the Friends of the Foundation luncheon and met many supporters of the FFA. One of the highlights of the day was the awarding of the state degrees. At the State Degree Dinner, I met members who had invested a great amount of time and energy to earn their state degree. As the recipients walked across the stage, each of them had a feeling of accomplishment. After the evening session, the final event of the night was a dance.

As Saturday rolled around, the end of convention crept closer. During the last session, the state officers handed the baton to the newly elected officers. Whether it was team reflections or retiring address, the current state officers were outstanding! The new officer team has some big shoes to fill, but I have no doubt it will not be a problem. After the final tap of the gavel, the convention came to a close. It was sad to see it end, because the enthusiasm shown by the members over the four days was awesome. It was a great week, between hanging out with members from Stevensville FFA, Red Lodge FFA, and Mission Valley FFA to working with the state officers. The convention was an experience that I will not soon forget!

After the convention ended, I joined the Peterson family for a night experiencing Montana. They found out that I had never rode a horse, so they decided it was about time I learned. That afternoon, I chased bulls and rode like a true cowboy (not quite!) in the foothills of Montana. We then spent the evening in a cabin on the side of a mountain, with the only access route by means of snowmobile. As we rode snowmobiles and relaxed in the hot tub, I continued to fall in love with Montana. The next morning, I thanked the Peterson's for the hospitality during my stay, headed down the mountain on a snowmobile, and boarded a plane back to Illinois. After a busy two weeks, I had a few days off before I was back on the road.

After growing up in Illinois and attending the University of Illinois, I have become a dedicated Fighting Illini fan. When the men's basketball team made it to the championship game this year, the Illini Nation anticipated bring home the title. Unfortunately, the team fell a few points short, but no one considers the season a failure. Why? Because every game the Illini played, they played to win. No one ever doubted that the team wanted to win every game. They practiced hard and played even harder. They showed up for every game, prepared to face their opponents. They never gave in the face of adversity, and did not find blame when they lost. The Illini made it to the title game, a success very few players achieve. No one can ever take that away from the team. We can all learn from the team to hold our heads high even if we do not win every time.

March 28, 2005



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

America's farmers and ranchers are the best in the world. You know their success is absolutely unparalleled. But I think in many ways what we see today is really just the beginning. The future really is limitless...

-Michael Johanns

After five weeks on the road, I was due for a little time at home. I flew home on Friday, March 11, and spent the weekend with my friends and family. On Monday, March 14, I met Kacy, Cliff, Becky, Shana and Rich of the Illinois FFA State Officer Team for a great dinner in Morton, Illinois. The next evening, I headed north to attend the Newark FFA Chapter Banquet. It was a fun banquet that truly highlighted the success of the students. On Wednesday, I took off for a short trip to Washington, D.C., to celebrate Ag Day on Thursday. State officers from Virginia and Maryland joined me for the day as toured Capital Hill and talked with Congressmen about agriculture. After a morning press conference emceed by Orion Samuelson and hosted by Rep. Bob Goodlatte of Virginia and Sen. Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, we crossed town to enjoy lunch at the National Press Club. The highlight of the day was hearing Secretary of Agriculture Michael Johanns speak about the future of agriculture. After the luncheon, it was back to Illinois for the weekend.

On Monday, April 21, I flew into Philadelphia to attend the 75th Delaware FFA State Convention. The convention was held at the University of Delaware in Newark. That evening the entire state officer team and I, as well as state officers from Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, went out for a dinner to celebrate the arrival of their convention. Rather than celebrate convention, the officers convinced the server that it was my birthday, and a song was sung in my honor! The Delaware convention officially kicked off on Tuesday morning as members from all across the state joined to celebrate 75 years of DE FFA success. In the morning, members participated in CDEs and workshops. After lunch, the first sessions was held by the state officers. Talk about excitement from an audience! As the officers ran down the aisles, members were out of their seats cheering for the team. Mr. Loudenslager was the keynote speaker for the dinner held at the convention, and the final event of the evening was the convention dance. The next day, members went on tours in the morning and attended the last session of convention. The new officers were elected and the convention came to a close. Delaware was the first convention I attended this year. Delaware FFA members continually impressed me and hanging out with members from the Networks FFA Chapter and the Smyrna FFA Chapter was a blast! I will never forget the great time I had in Delaware. On Thursday, I flew back home to spend the Easter weekend with my family before I took off once again.

As we look to the future, one area we can always be optimistic about is agriculture. During the past two weeks, every event I attended revolved around the future of agriculture. It is amazing to see FFA members come together at the local and state level to celebrate a belief in the future of agriculture. That same belief has the power to bring politicians of opposing parties together for a day to honor America's strongest industry. As FFA members, the opportunities we have during our time in the organization prepare us to be part of that bright future!



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

March 14, 2005

Success is when preparation and opportunity meet.

-Bobby Unser

On Saturday, February 26, the entire officer team headed to Michigan to focus on preparations for state conventions, NLC SO and SPC. While working, we stayed at the Edward Lowe Foundation. Edward Lowe was the inventor of kitty litter and set up the foundation in the southwest part of Michigan. Unlike any hotel we had been in before, we spent the week staying in boxcars. These were no ordinary boxcars as they had been gutted and refinished with bunk beds and furniture made from trees from the property. Our meetings were held in a recreated small town main street. The first few days were spent exploring the area and preparing for the week ahead. On Monday, Dr. Rick Rigsby joined us in Michigan to share his tips on public speaking. I really enjoyed the opportunity to work with such a talented man and learn from his approach. After working all day on Tuesday, we took the afternoon off to venture into the wilderness in a Hummer! It was an awesome ride as we climbed up and down hills making our way through the forest. We were joined by Tiffany Sanderson and Doug Kueker on Wednesday as we dove into the National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLC SO). Every five years the curriculum is redeveloped, and we are fortunate to be the first team to teach the new content. As we invested the next few days discovering the conference, we quickly realized the potential of the new curriculum and the great job done by Doug and Tiffany. As the week went on, I became even more excited to be presenting the conferences in June. Justine and I will partner conferences in Utah, Nebraska, Arkansas and South Carolina. On Friday afternoon, we switched our focus to SPC (State Presidents' Conference). The conference is held in Washington, D.C., at the end of July. It is hard to believe that we are already talking about the event, but it is just a few months away. As the saying goes, time does fly when you are having fun! Between the great meals and the terrific hospitality, I truly enjoyed our time in Michigan even though it snowed nearly every day. Over the past few months, I have seen enough snow to last nearly a lifetime! On Saturday, March 5, we traveled back to Indianapolis to prepare for our second Business and Industry Tour.

As Rachael and I headed to the airport on Sunday, we began to realize it was going to be a busy week ahead! We flew from Indianapolis to Baltimore, and then drove to Lancaster, Penn., for the night. Monday morning we were joined by state officers Michael Hess from Pennsylvania and Rebecca Schnetzer from New Jersey for our visit to New Holland. As we talked about the partnership between FFA and New Holland, we found new opportunities to grow our relationship. After the meeting, Rachael and I made our way back to Baltimore to catch a train into Washington, D.C. Tuesday morning started with a breakfast with Mike Torrey, a former Kansas State FFA Officer who works for the USDA. We then met with Sen. Larry Craig of Idaho and his legislative assistant Travis Brown to discuss agricultural education and FFA. Once again, we were caught in an "East Coast Blizzard" as we made our way across town! After being delayed by the



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

weather, our next stop for the day was lunch at Mt. Vernon, where we presented Wilson and Betty Carnes a plaque for their 25 years of support for the Foundation. Mr. Carnes worked at the National FFA Center while it was in Alexandria, Va., as the editor of *FFA New Horizons*. After lunch, we went back into Washington to meet Darren Coppock, the 1986-1987 National Western Region Vice President who is currently the chief executive officer of the National Association of Wheat Growers. Dinner was at the Willard Hotel, where we met Everett Zillinger, a past Kansas FFA member, who is now the Director of Government Relations for The Fertilizer Institute. The Willard Hotel is located next to the White House and is famous for its lobby. Many years ago, the president could be found relaxing in the lobby of the hotel. Individuals would come to the lobby to discuss issues of concern with the president. Thus, the term lobbyist was coined in the Willard Hotel.

Tuesday was very hectic, but rewarding at the same time!

Our first meeting on Wednesday, March 9, was breakfast at Bread and Chocolate with Allan Johnson of Rural Development. We made our way across town for a meeting with Fred McClure, the 1973-1974 National FFA Secretary that is currently a partner in Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal, LLP. We then joined Nels Ackerson of Ackerson Kauffman Fex, P.C. for lunch at the National Press Club. Mr. Ackerson was the 1963-1964 National FFA President. At the National Press Club, we heard former Senator Sam Nunn speak on the topic of nuclear weapons. After lunch, we hopped in the van and traveled to Wilmington, Delaware, for the night.

Thursday was kicked off by a breakfast at the Hotel DuPont with Chris Cashman, a past Foundation Board member. We then met representatives from DuPont for lunch to discuss the partnership between DuPont and FFA. After our visit, we joined Robert Woods, a past Foundation Board member, for a stop at Starbuck's before heading to Gettysburg, Penn. We explored the Gettysburg area that evening and had a great colonial cooked meal before retiring for the night.

We started Friday in Gettysburg with a tour of the battlefields. We then crossed town to meet with the Gettysburg FFA Chapter and discuss the value of teamwork. After the school visit, we headed to Mason Dixon Farms, owned and operated by the Waybright's. Richard Waybright was a National FFA Vice President in 1950-1951, and his son Doyle was a National Vice President in 1973-1974. The farm is a massive dairy operation that has found success through innovation, such as energy recycling systems and robotic milking. Richard Waybright also let us drive his hybrid car to lunch, which was amazing when you think of all the technology that is in hybrid cars. After lunch, we headed back to Baltimore, and I flew home for a short break. The past two weeks have been very busy, but the rewards gained were well worth it!

Often times we hear the word preparation and immediately think of it being a chore. It takes hard work to prepare properly, but where would we be without it? We can all think of a time when poor preparation resulted in poor performance. When we prepare, we set ourselves up for success. During our week in Michigan, I realized to make state conventions, NLC SO and SPC successful, we must prepare ourselves. No matter what the task may be in our life, preparation is a crucial component that can affect success!



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

2/28/2005

Your big opportunity may be right where you are now.
-Napoleon Hill

What a busy two weeks! On February 14, Rachael and I left Ohio and headed to St. Louis for first day of Business and Industry Tours. We had a terrific Valentine's Day dinner at the Golden Corral buffet. On Tuesday morning, we met with representatives from RaboAgrifinance, an agricultural lending company, and Solae, a leader in soy protein. In the afternoon, we were joined by state officers from Missouri and Illinois. Together, we prepared for an evening with employees from Monsanto. We started the evening with a reception for individual contributors and ended the evening at Dave and Buster's, where we ate and played games. It was an awesome opportunity to get to work with officers from both states, and Rachael and I were very impressed with all of them! On Wednesday, we had the opportunity to visit the Monsanto Chesterfield Village research facility before joining Monsanto employees for lunch. It was incredible to see the innovations Monsanto is working on as they look to the future of agriculture. Rachael and I said goodbye to the state officers and boarded a plane en route to Arkansas. On Thursday morning, we drove back into Missouri to visit Bass Pro Shops. While there, we went on a tour of the corporate office and discussed the company's role as an FFA supporter. After the visit we headed to Lambert's Cafe - Home for the Throwned Rolls, for an outstanding lunch. Rachael appreciated the home style cooking, and I found out I am not a big fan of molasses! Before heading back to Arkansas for the night we stopped by Branson, Missouri, to catch a show. Unfortunately, none of the shows we wanted to see were playing because it was not the tourist season! On Friday morning we were joined by state officers from Arkansas and Missouri for our visit to Tyson Foods. Mr. Randy Smith hosted a luncheon for employees that were former FFA members. A few local FFA members also attended the luncheon with their advisors. The meeting was kicked off by the FFA opening ceremonies presented by the Springdale FFA Chapter, who did a tremendous job! The team of students did an excellent job, and brought back many great memories for the past FFA members. After the great meeting at Tyson foods, Rachael and I traveled back the Indianapolis to prepare for FFA week.

Before we split up and headed to different states for FFA week, all of the national officers had fun watching movies and preparing for the week ahead. On Sunday, February 20, I boarded a plane heading for Massachusetts yet that night. Due to nearly a foot of snow, I was delayed in New York City and hoped to get the Massachusetts that night. I eventually made it and geared up for the five days ahead! The entire week I stayed on Cape Cod, but unfortunately I could not see much due to the enormous amount of snow! During the week, it snowed over 20 inches. This made travel quite interesting.

We kicked off the week by doing a television and radio interview on Monday morning before heading to Norfolk County FFA that evening. Mr. Kevin Keith of National FFA joined me the entire week, as well as a few of the Massachusetts state officers. Before



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

heading back to our hotel that night, we swung into one of the million Dunkin' Donuts in Massachusetts. Dunkin' Donuts are everywhere in the state, and because of my love for donuts, I knew it was going to be a great week. The state officers and I even had fun counting the Dunkin' Donuts stores we saw while traveling during the week! Tuesday morning we made our way to Middleboro to visit Ocean Spray cranberries. We met with Randy Papadellis, the President and CEO, and sampled a few of the company's products. We then headed west to visit the UMass campus and meet with representatives from the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency. On our way to Boston Wednesday morning, we once again stop the Dunkin' Donuts for breakfast. While in Boston, we met with Doug Gillespie, the commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources. We later visited Boston's Italian district and had some awesome pizza for lunch! Our next stop was the Massachusetts Department of Education, where we met Jeffrey Wheeler, the State Vocational Education Coordinator. Before heading back to the Cape, we took a short tour Boston and saw Plymouth Rock. That evening the officers and I jumped in a car and travel nearly two hours to Provincetown. Provincetown is located at the very tip of Cape Cod. We had a great night traveling and talking in the car! We kicked off Thursday morning with yet another visit to Dunkin' Donuts and then made our way to the Massachusetts Farm Bureau. After visiting with representatives from the farm bureau, we had lunch at the Massachusetts Ag Club, the oldest agricultural club in the United States. Our afternoon was spent with Alex Dowse, president of the Massachusetts Farm Bureau and owner of Dowse Orchard. Before heading back to the Cape, we hung out with members from Essex County FFA at their high school. We made one last trip to Dunkin Donuts on Friday morning before visiting Bristol County FFA and touring their wildlife museum, animal care facilities, and plant research center. Later that afternoon, I flew back to Indianapolis for nearly 10 inches of snow to head to Michigan on Saturday. What an amazing experience spending FFA in Massachusetts!

During both Business and Industry Tours and FFA week, I had the chance to spread the message of the FFA. I quickly realized that the organization has so many opportunities for students that it is nearly impossible to know every one of them! Because of the countless opportunities, it is not surprising that nearly every student finds success during their time and FFA. We often overlook the success we have achieved from our time in FFA because we compare it to the accomplishment of others. Success has a different meaning for everyone, but until we know what it means to us, we will never be successful!

2/14/2005

Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.

-Mark Twain

After arriving home from Japan on February 5, we spent the next few days at home resting up for next series of trips. We all appreciated the opportunity to get acquainted



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

with American culture once again. Following my stay at home, I headed to Indianapolis to gear up for Business and Industry Tours. We spent a day at Elanco training with foundation staff for the upcoming weeks. From Indianapolis, the entire team headed to Dayton, Ohio, to kickoff our first week of Business and Industry Tours. Dr. Armstrong, the chairman of the National Foundation Sponsors Board, was our host for the weekend. He and his wife kept us busy touring the National Air Force Museum, attending a Dayton hockey game, and visiting North American Nutrition Companies and Akey. I truly appreciated the opportunity to learn about the mission and beliefs of Dr. Armstrong's company. It was impressive to see how every employee we met exemplified the mission of doing things the right way. Every employee added value to the company, and each individual knew that they were important to the success of the company. After that weekend, there is no doubt that Dr. Armstrong will provide outstanding leadership for the foundation this year. What a great way to start or tours of duty with the foundation! Dr. Armstrong told us how his company values doing what is right at all times. Too often we hear stories about companies not doing what was right and later paying the price. Not only is it refreshing to hear about a company focused on much more than the bottom line, it is also great to hear about a company that always does what is morally sound. In the world we live in today, temptation and greed often overshadow the value of integrity. Through media we hear more about celebrity gossip, trials, and politics than we ever do about success, integrity, and dedication. I believe FFA provides a great opportunity to be involved in an organization built upon integrity, as well as many other values. As FFA members we must do what is right at all times, because if we do not, who will in our generation? We could all learn from Dr. Armstrong and the mission of his company.

January 25, 2005

Read all about our trip to Japan! http://www.ffa.org/students/documents/no_japan.pdf

January 16, 2005

The only type of change I like is a change that I make!

-Dr. Larry Case

On Sunday, January 9, we headed back to Indianapolis for a week of working at the FFA Center. The areas we covered included business and industry tours, our Japan trip, and the January Board of Directors meeting. Although we worked hard, we did have some time to play! The officer team participated in a white elephant gift exchange with staff, in which I walked away as the proud new owner of a bathroom soap set. On Monday we took a trip downtown to tour the site of the 79th National FFA Convention. The tour allowed us to view the hotels and facilities that will be used during convention and have a better understanding of how everything will play out in Indianapolis. Being the sports fan that I am, I was thoroughly excited to have the opportunity to have an all-access tour of the RCA Dome and Conseco Fieldhouse. All of the officers were extremely impressed with what the city of Indianapolis has to offer the convention and the excitement the city



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

shows toward hosting the blue corduroy jackets! On Friday, the entire team headed to Illinois to spend the weekend relaxing at my home before our trip to Washington, D.C. No matter what path we take in our lives, we face changes from time to time. When we face that change, we sometimes dwell on what may go wrong rather than what could go right. If we focus on that, we limit ourselves and miss the opportunity for something new. Wouldn't it just be easier to accept change and adapt to become successful? Anyone who has attended the national convention in Louisville has seen how awesome FFA is and made great memories during the experience. Some would argue that convention will not be the same in Indianapolis, and focus on the fact that the change may not be good. Rather than use our energy looking at what may go wrong or not be the same, it pays to view a change as a new opportunity to succeed! Louisville has been great for national convention, and I look forward to seeing what is next in Indianapolis.

1/4/2005

None of us is as smart as all of us
-Ken Blanchard

After a great weekend in Princeville, the team headed to Washington, D.C., for the Board of Directors Meeting. We all had been looking forward to the event, and we knew it would be an amazing experience to help shape the organization. The first night we joined Dr. Larry Case and C. Coleman Harris for dinner out on the town. We enjoyed getting the chance catch up with them and their families and discuss what would be happening the next few days. The first day of the board meeting was a strategic planning session. During the session, we were challenged by Dr. Kirby Barrick of the University of Illinois to think "outside of the box" as we look to the future of FFA. It was humbling to have all of the minds in one room there for the betterment of agriculture education and FFA. As we worked for the next two days and business matters were handled, we walked away in the end knowing the changes made will further advance our organization.

During our stay in the city, another important event was taking place: The Presidential Inauguration of President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney. We had the privilege to attend the ceremonies at the Capital, as well as the Cattleman's Society Party, Texas-Wyoming Ball, the Agriculture Gala, and the Wyoming Society Party. Everywhere you looked, people crowded the streets, celebrating (or protesting) another four years of our current administration. What an awesome experience!

As we geared up for our trip to Japan, we took a day to explore the Japanese culture. Ms. Mahoney, who spent years in Japan as a translator, took us through the everyday life of the Japanese and provided tips that would be useful during our trip. We worked on our Japanese and tasted various snacks and beverages to become more knowledgeable on the trip. We ended the day at a Japanese restaurant, where we dined on steamed beans, sushi, and my favorite, tonkatsu. Soon it would be off to Japan and the experience of a lifetime would begin!



Jay Kelley National Officer Journal

No matter what level we are at in FFA, it seems we are always part of a team. During my stay in Washington, I realized once again the power a team can have. I saw how the team of members came together to evaluate changes and progress the organization through the Board of Director's meeting. At the inauguration, we were reminded how it is a team of people that lead this country, not just President Bush alone. The six of us officers realized that we would have to be a team in Japan during our training because we would be placed in a totally new place that may be way out of our comfort zones. I think back to some of the teams I have been on in FFA and am reminded of the powerful accomplishments we made when we worked together. When teamwork happens, the results are unlimited!

1/9/2005

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step....

-Chinese Proverb

What an incredible week! On January 2, the entire team flew to Georgia for the 2005 Experience Week. During the week, we traveled the state presenting to chapters and holding meetings with public officials to prepare us for situations we will encounter throughout the year. We had the opportunity to hang out with some awesome FFA Chapters, such as the Toombs County FFA, the Effingham County High FFA, and the Wheeler County FFA. We were joined by the Georgia FFA State Officers throughout the week, which added a lot of fun to the experience. I was also introduced to some southern cookin' throughout the week! I had fun eating "low country boil" with Shaun at Effingham South FFA chapter, and enjoyed grits with Paula at the FFA/FCCLA Center. We had the opportunity to present Governor Sonny Perdue and Georgia Farm Bureau President Wayne Dollar with their Honorary American Degrees and discuss Georgia agriculture. We even got a little muddy on the trip, as the six of us took on the challenge course at the FFA/FCCLA Camp! Our trip took us all over the state, starting in Atlanta and traveling to Plains, Rochelle, Statesboro, Savannah, Macon, and Athens before returning to Indianapolis.

Being from the Midwest, I learned a great deal about agriculture from the trip. Georgia agriculture is very diverse, ranging from trees and cotton to peanuts and cattle. The weather in Georgia varied greatly from home, as it was in the lower 70's during our trip. The experience made me realize the importance of diversity in our organization and how it benefits all parties involved. It is easy to focus on the differences in where we come from and what we value make us diverse, but we sometimes forget the importance of what we each bring to the table. If we all were the same, it would make for a boring organization that lacked growth and differences. It amazes me to see that even though we are diverse, all of us as FFA members share some of the same goals: premier leadership, personal growth, and career success. I had a terrific experience during the



Jay Kelley **National Officer Journal**

week, anticipate learning more as I go, and cannot wait to have the opportunity to meet more awesome members throughout the year!