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## Attracting Students into Agriculture

**a**s a teacher, you know the broad array of careers available in agriculture and all of the opportunities available to students once they enter your classroom and join FFA. The challenge is communicating that information to the incoming students who are naïve on the topic.

The good news is that you and your colleagues across the country are making progress. Membership in the National FFA Organization reached 464,267 at the end of the 2002-03 school year – its highest level in 19 years!

That success is due to agriculture teachers at the local level who are implementing innovative and effective recruitment and retention programs. At Albert Lea High School in Minnesota, teachers Kim Meyer and Leah Addington have developed a two-pronged recruitment program composed of both short-term and long-term tactics.

The chapter officers always host a booth at the incoming freshman activity, for example. "A quality officer team speaks loudly when it comes to recruiting new students into the program," says Addington. "They can deliver the message much more effectively than we can as teachers." The messages they focus on include leadership development and opportunities to travel.

The chapter also hosts a summer picnic and invites the incoming freshmen along with their parents. "We try to involve the incoming members, their friends, parents and siblings," says Meyer. "We try to impart a feeling of belonging and help them feel more comfortable as they move into high school."

In the long-term category, activities the chapter started years ago are now paying



recruitment dividends. "We work with the local chamber of commerce to host a farm tour for all the third-grade students in our county," Meyer explains. "Each fall, we take the third graders to visit a dairy farm, a hog farm and a potato farm. Each student gets to take a 5-pound bag of potatoes home with them. Our FFA members serve as tour guides and bus hosts. It is amazing how the students remember that activity and decide they want to be in FFA when they are old enough."

Another long-term tactic involves working with the kindergarten classes. "Our kindergarten classes just expanded to an all-day, every day format," Meyer explains. "Our Alumni purchased farm toy sets for each classroom. The members make presentations to each classroom and explain the toys. It's a very basic introduction to agriculture that we hope will begin providing a base of agricultural literacy."

Beyond all the elements that work to attract students to the classroom, Meyer feels one of the most important things the agriculture program provides is a place to belong.

"Kids are in our classroom before and after school," he says. "We always have something for them to do. Our classroom has become the default coffee shop/break area. It is a security blanket for our students. Building our students' self-esteem is such a huge part of what we do. As a teacher, I feel it's my job to go that little extra distance and show that you care. It can be as simple as saying 'good morning' in the hallway or making hot chocolate. Those little gestures go a long way in keeping students in our program."





## FFA SCHOLARSHIPS

# Applications NOW Available.



**\$20  
Million  
in Scholarships  
in 20  
Years!**

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**Yes, you read that right. Last year, one out of every four students who applied received a scholarship!**

And, last year over 100 scholarships equaling \$100,000 were not awarded because NO ONE applied. FFA advisors and agriculture teachers...it's up to you to encourage your students to take advantage of this opportunity.

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Make it a win-win for your students, their parents, your school, FFA and your community.  
Encourage your students to apply today!



# Making a Difference

FFA Advisors Making a Difference is published eight times a year to assist FFA advisors in making a positive difference in the lives of students.

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## The FFA Mission

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

## The Agricultural Education Mission

Agricultural education prepares students for successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems.

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## Watch for the LPS Logo



The logo shows how this issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* relates to Local Program Success, a national initiative to strengthen agricultural education programs. You'll see this icon on all FFA materials. The shaded apples show which areas the materials address.

# Perspectives



By Devin DeLozier  
Adair FFA Advisor  
Adair, Oklahoma

## Retaining Students in Your Program

**W**hen it comes to building and maintaining a sound agricultural education program, I feel retaining students over the course of the program is just as critical as recruiting students initially.

When students first enter the Agriscience I course, they are required to become FFA members. This allows members to become active and have a better understanding of FFA and agricultural education.

Members are encouraged to develop a plan that illustrates how they will achieve each degree within FFA. The first year consists of students starting an FFA record book, which allows them to document their accomplishments and justify their advancement through each degree. Members are also exposed to career development events with emphasis on the Greenhand Quiz, Quiz Bowl and the FFA Creed speaking contests. Members are also strongly encouraged to develop a supervised agricultural experience program that involves the exhibition of beef, sheep, swine and equine. This provides a well-rounded experience for each greenhand member.

When members enter their sophomore and junior years, they are advised to continue a strong SAE and leadership plan of study. Members are exposed to more advanced public speaking and career development events. Focusing on these areas and maintaining good quality records

allows these students to achieve the Chapter FFA Degree. At this stage, members are also encouraged to attend Washington Leadership Conference, Made For Excellence, Advanced Leadership Development, Alumni Camp and state and national FFA conventions. Members may also run for a chapter office.

As members enter their senior year, they realize the need for strong record keeping skills and how important it was to stay active throughout the last three years. They apply for the state FFA degree and state proficiency awards. The seniors are also exposed to a higher level of course work within both the animal science and ag power and technology courses.

The final stage of student retention is for members to apply for the American FFA Degree while attending a 2- or 4-year college or technical school. Members receiving the American FFA Degree are allowed a great conclusion to their FFA career, which no other student organization provides.

Through agricultural education and the FFA, I feel we as educators have the unique opportunity to expose members to a variety of quality, sound opportunities. Students that graduate from our programs are traditionally more focused and willing to work not only in agriculture, but also in industry or other types of occupations. The bottom line is that maintaining and retaining members is easy when all the unique opportunities within FFA are presented to students.



# Making Connections Early

**j**eff Voss and Laura Zehnder have unleashed a powerful tool in their effort to recruit students into the agricultural education program at Jackson County Central High School in Jackson, Minn. It is called teaching an eighth-grade exploratory agriculture course.

Voss added the class to the agriculture course offerings 14 years ago and the program has grown significantly. About 10 years ago, school administrators decided to make the nine-week course mandatory for all eighth-grade students.

"When I started teaching here, I had 29 students in grades nine through 12 enrolled in agriculture," Voss says. "The administration gave me a couple of years to turn the program around and get the numbers up. It didn't happen quickly because it took some time to reorient the curriculum and get students to buy in. But once the students buy in, they sell the program to their peers."

Today, Voss and Zehnder teach an average of 250 students per year, which includes all the eighth graders. They have 115 FFA members.

## Exploring Agriculture

"The eighth-grade program is huge for us," Voss says. "We use it to open the students' eyes and get them thinking about the career possibilities. On the first day of each class, Ms. Zehnder writes the word 'agriculture' on the board and asks the students to call out related careers. They can usually only think of two or three, and they are all production related."

Zehnder continues the course with an activity she calls "Corn to Cornflakes." She has her students work in small groups to identify all the people in different careers

that it takes to produce corn and move it through processing and distribution until it is on the breakfast table in the form of corn flakes. "I have them use the agriculture careers brochure available through FFA," Zehnder says. "The activity really makes them think and they discover a wide range of careers they have never thought about along the way."

Voss continues, "The students get really fired up and are ready to enroll when they become freshman. The hardest sell is to the parents who don't understand what the program has to offer. We've been working through that and making progress by being very visible in the community."

## Engaging Parents

Zehnder adds, "We have an active advisory board and they send a letter to all the parents of incoming freshman each year. The letter explains the agricultural education program and the benefits it provides to students. The letter also encourages parents to contact either of us teachers or the advisory board members if they have questions. This tactic has helped persuade parents to let their children enroll in our program."

Another tactic Zehnder and Voss feel makes a big difference is their visibility in the community. "Our students are in the local newspaper all the time," Zehnder says. "We have the students write short reports and deliver photos to the paper after each activity. This effort pays off in the level of coverage we receive. Beyond what we submit, the newspaper staff writes the occasional feature story."

Voss agrees and adds, "Beyond the newspaper, we try to stay highly visible in the community by attending a variety of activities and working with local businesses to provide real-world experiences for our students. We have one employer in town who says she can easily spot which job applicants are FFA members by the way they present and handle themselves in public. Those messages get passed along to parents and reinforce everything else we do."

## Keeping Courses Current

The other major area of focus for Voss and Zehnder is keeping their courses current and challenging. "I think it's just as important to keep the work rigorous as it is to keep it fun," Voss says. "You need to set high expectations for your students and make the courses challenging and relevant. As our community changed, I've dropped more and more production from the coursework and added other elements, such as business and marketing. If you provide a quality product, you'll keep good students in your program."

**“You need to set high expectations for your students and make the courses challenging and relevant.”**



Jackson County Central FFA officers following the 2003 chapter banquet.

# Building Membership in Montana

**a**cross the country, FFA membership has slowly been increasing over the past few years. Here is a brief look at two programs in Montana that have increased membership using different approaches.

The agriculture program in Wolf Point High School, Wolf Point, Mont., serves a student population that is 70 percent Native American. The school is part of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, which includes members of the Lakota, Sioux and Assinaboine tribes.

## Show Students You Care

DuWayne Wilson has been teaching agriculture here for 21 years and has found that developing a good rapport with the students makes all the difference. "The old saying about people wanting to know how much you care before they care how much you know certainly applies here," Wilson says.

"I go out of my way to let the students know I'm interested in their lives, their successes," Wilson continues. "I feel it is important for students to know their teacher is interested in their lives, families and things that happen beyond the classroom. I think one of the main reasons I've been successful in recruiting and retaining students is that I've always felt the kids are more important than the curriculum."

## Incorporate Student Interests

Don't let Wilson's statements fool you into thinking he doesn't worry about his curriculum, though. He's constantly adapting his courses to meet student and

community needs. As an example, he's incorporated a lot of wildlife management information in his range science and agronomy courses.

"My students are more interested in buffalo, antelope, elk and deer than they are cows and sheep," he says. "But they need to understand range management and ecosystem concepts to be able to understand what wildlife needs, so I weave the two together."

Wilson also makes an effort to keep the learning hands on. "I use hands-on activities in all of my classes," he says. "I think of them as carrots to entice students into the process. If you keep the lessons fun, you'll keep the students engaged and your day will go more smoothly, too."

As an example, Wilson uses fish to teach students about feeds and feeding in his animal science class. "Although cattle is the primary industry here, I can teach the same concepts using fish in a classroom tank. I tell my students we have a feedlot right here in the classroom."

## Bringing a Program Back to Life

In Red Lodge, Mont., Scott Blain came into a program with just 6 FFA members and 30 agriculture students. "I started in the fall of 2002 by asking the students what they wanted," Blain says. "I began adjusting the curriculum based on stu-



Students in Blain's courses enjoy a variety of hands-on lessons.

dent, community and administration input and things just started to happen."

Blain continues, "I showed them what FFA had to offer and we started to travel a little. We took 16 students to Bozeman for Ag Days and then started working on career development events. The students began to realize what they had been missing out on and FFA suddenly became the new, cool thing in our school."

This fall, Blain has fully one-third of his school's students enrolled in the agriculture program, up to 50 from 30. The Red Lodge FFA Chapter has grown from 6 members to 28.

"The program really has experienced a rebirth," Blain says. "First we had to overcome the existing stereotype of what the program was all about. This year, I have a lot of students without an agriculture background and they are just beginning to understand all that the program offers. Now the challenge I have is to focus on retaining quality students and keeping the program challenging."

These two examples, along with others in this issue, demonstrate that there are many approaches to increasing program enrollment and FFA membership. Which ideas might work in your program?



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# Local Program Success

## Shaping Program Perceptions



By Jim Armbruster, Local  
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**d**uring the past several years, a wealth of information has been provided to teachers through the *Local Program Success Guide*, *Get Connected Partner Handbook* and the LPS Promising Practices. In all of this material, one vital aspect has been overlooked—community and administration perception of our agricultural education programs.

If you do not know how your community perceives your program, you need to find out. Early in my career, I moved to a new school. In my attempts to recruit quality students, I had a parent tell me that there was no way her child would be associated with a program of “party animals.” I did some additional research and found out that, even though I was working with a group of top-notch students, they were perceived in the community as the “party kids.”

I sat down with my officer team and we discussed this community

perception, developed goals and standards that my officer teams worked hard over the next two years to implement. The parent who gave me the insight into this problem enrolled her youngest child into the program at the start of the third school year.

If your community perceives your program as for the “farm kids only” or “cowboys and cowgirls” or for boys only or girls only or whatever stereotype that might apply, then you are limiting your abilities to recruit quality students regardless of background. As agriculture, ethnic demographics, educational and employment opportunities in our communities change, so must our agriculture programs.

## Determine Program Perceptions

Do you know how your administration perceives your program? Does your program have a large number of academically challenged, discipline problems or unmotivated students? The guidance counselors in your school have a great impact on the students who enroll in your program.

Use the total program concept: agricultural education programs should encompass three equal components of classroom, FFA and SAE. Leadership and personal development through FFA and career skill development through supervised agricultural experience programs are integral parts of the total agricultural education program. Include in your scope and sequence required grades that the

students must earn. Require students to be involved and then work to ensure that all students have an opportunity to be successful.

## Challenging Coursework

Build academic rigor into your curriculum. Have your students write research papers, complete agriscience projects, prepare and present speeches regarding agriculture or prepare a presentation on a local issue facing the agriculture community. Partner with academic teachers to ensure you are supporting the academic standards required in your state.

Actively recruit students from the top 10% of each grade level. Students who are recognized for their academic achievements will help you recruit other students of similar academic standards. Have these students help those in your program who struggle with academic challenges.

Seek opportunities for your students to earn scholarships. Nothing grabs the attention of an administrator or counselor more than a program that helps students earn scholarship for post-secondary education.

In summary, perceptions can be changed. All it takes is understanding the perception, the source of the perception and then developing goals and plans to change the program. This does not happen overnight. It only happens with concentrated effort focused on student success and accomplishments utilizing a total program of agricultural education.

**Local Program Success** is a national initiative designed to enhance the quality and success of local agricultural education programs. LPS uses the total program concept of Instruction, SAE and FFA and four strategies (Program Planning, Marketing, Partnerships and Professional Growth) to assist local teachers in facilitating successful local programs that meet the needs of students and the communities they serve.

# Recruiting for Life

**m**ost agriculture students never realize when they enter a program how much impact agricultural education and FFA will have on their lives. As first-year students, they are seeking opportunities to attach themselves to new career ambitions and key leaders in their lives who will lead them down productive paths for the future.

To recruit and retain students, you are challenged to provide a top-value “product” and make it easier for students to choose to continue their agricultural education. Until they uncover the opportunity that encourages them to grow and to reach new heights, everything is an option. You hold the key to opening the door for students and becoming the teacher that makes a difference in their lives. The impact you make in recruiting students and providing them with a challenging and rewarding program could make a difference in the rest of their lives.

Recruiting students is only the first step. As their teacher, you will need to provide students with a reason to remain in your program for years to come. It is common for most students to remain involved and ask for more responsibilities after they have been selected to participate in an activity.

## Helpful Resources

Creating ways to involve all students and members will increase the retention rate and continue to build numbers for the program. For more information on how to design a plan to recruit and retain students, please refer to the *FFA Guide to Recruitment and Retention Handbook* (available on the 2003-04 Local Program Resource Guide CD). On pages 22-29, you will find sample plans, budgets and planning calendars.

There are also examples of ways to promote your program. They can be found on pages 50-75 in the handbook. If you would prefer a hard copy of the handbook, it can be obtained by ordering through the 2003-2004 *Agricultural Education Resource Catalog*. To order the handbook or other agricultural education resources, call 1-888-352-2668 or access the web site at [www.ffaunlimited.org].

## Beyond High School

Once your students have completed your program, it is easy to just wish them the best and assume they will find their way on to post-secondary education and, ultimately, a career.

In an effort to increase their success and keep them connected to agriculture and related fields, it is important for you, as their teacher, to advise and guide them to the next level.

This can be accomplished by providing them with information and introducing them to post-secondary options. As you do this, it is important to not only look at academics but also provide them with the model of the total program (instruction, SAE and FFA) at the collegiate level. This would include becoming active in a collegiate organization (collegiate FFA, Alpha Tau Alpha, National Postsecondary Agricultural Student Organization [PAS], Block and Bridle and others) to keep them engaged in leadership and professional activities.

The other remaining piece that has become very popular in the last several years is for them to be involved in an internship experience at the collegiate level. Your advice and assistance in connecting them with those at the post-secondary level who can provide internship options will prove most helpful.



By Tony Small  
Local Program Success Manager  
National FFA Organization

## Lasting Impact

Your assistance in advising and guiding the future for your students will have a lasting impact on their commitment to support agricultural education programs in the future. They will more likely become involved with the local Alumni organization as well as be active volunteers, assisting with the local program in the future. It is another way for you, as their advisor, to provide premier leadership, personal growth and career success to your students.

Keeping them involved from the time you introduce them to your program until they have successfully transitioned to the post-secondary level will make a huge difference to your students as well as the local program. Seeing your students become successful is very rewarding as a teacher. Your investment of time in your students will make a difference in their lives. As you work to bring students into your program each year, remember you are recruiting for life.



“First-year students are seeking opportunities to attach themselves to new career ambitions and key leaders in their lives who will lead them down productive paths for the future.”

# Animal Magnetism

**W**hen students walk into Tara Berescik's agriculture classroom in Gramsville, New York, they are instantly drawn to the ferrets, gerbils and other small animals that populate the place. Berescik uses the animals not only to attract students, but also to teach them what they want to learn.

"My room is a bit of a walking zoo," Berescik says. "I like kids to explore and learn new things. The animals capture their attention. Once I have their attention, I can channel it in other directions."

## Student-Driven Courses

Berescik, who teaches at Tri-Valley Central School, has turned the agriculture program around in the four years she's been here. When she arrived, the courses were fairly traditional and the FFA chapter had 12 members. Berescik began modifying the courses to reflect student interests. The 240 students in the program now choose from a wide variety of courses, including environmental science and floral design. And, the FFA chapter now boasts 150 members.

Students are introduced to the agriculture program in the seventh grade. "I teach seventh- and eighth-grade modules in technology and general agriculture, respectively," Berescik explains. "The courses are very basic introductions to environmental science, plus I cover introductory material in leadership, floral design and other areas."

During the leadership segment, Berescik discussed the opportunities available not only in FFA, but also in the school's student council and FBLA chapter. "I promote the opportunities equally because I think it's important for students

to understand they have choices and I understand that FFA might not be the right leadership avenue for all students. The students also don't feel pressured into one place when all of the leadership opportunities are opened to them. I think that makes them feel more comfortable with me."

## Getting, Keeping Involvement

She also makes a considerable effort to make learning fun. "One of the best ways I know of to get students involved is to make sure they are enjoying themselves. We have pizza parties, play laser tag and host other activities along with our FFA meetings to encourage participation."

Once she has their attention, Berescik works hard to keep students engaged by offering independent study opportunities. "With just one teacher, I can't offer everything that interests my students," she says. "So, I offer independent study where they can come into my classroom and learn what they want to learn. I have 15 students who are doing independent studies in leadership, others in advanced environmental science and floral design. I also had a young woman who did an independent study in advanced agronomy. She developed a 200-page portfolio that included weeds, seeds and insects. She's now looking at a career in entomology."

Another benefit of offering independent study is the option of having students teach their peers. "I love the fact that I have students who can teach other students more than I can in their areas of interest. It builds their self-confidence and lightens my load."



Berescik and two students, Julia Bentley and Catherine Harth, work with two of the school's ferrets. Students bathe, clip nails, clean cages and care for all the animals during the year and over breaks.

## Maintaining Visibility

In addition to these activities, Berescik makes a concerted effort to make sure the agriculture program is highly visible in the school and the community. "It doesn't take a big effort, but it does take a consistent effort to maintain your visibility," she says. "For example, in my eighth-grade module I teach the students how to use floral tape and they make a floral pen. It costs about \$4 for all the supplies for the class, the students learn a skill and the pens are highly visible as the students carry them around the school or take them home. When my floral design students are working on arrangements, their finished work goes to the library or the school office or some other place that is visible. They don't just sit in my classroom. It helps everyone know what we are doing!"

Berescik also makes an effort to build relationships and interact with the academic teachers in the school. "Because I've made an effort to work with the English teacher, when it comes time for her to assign a research paper, she encourages the students who are in my program to base their papers on a related topic," Berescik says. "Those kinds of actions reinforce what the students are learning in my classes and helps them build their academic skills. That's when everybody wins."



# Agriculture Teacher Named Outstanding Young American by Jaycees

**m**att Schweer, Arkansas City High School, Kansas, agriculture teacher and FFA advisor, recently received one of the Ten Outstanding Young American Awards (TOYA) presented by the United States Junior Chamber.

"I was overwhelmed to receive this award," Schweer says. "I am an educator. I do what millions of others do every day. When I got up to receive the award, I felt like I was representing the education family and specifically the agricultural education family. People who have faced many different challenges and have made significant contributions to our society surrounded me. I feel honored to be able to get up every day and do what I have been gifted to do – and that is teach."

## Excellence in Education

Charles Jennings, founder of the Center for Education of Youth and Family and a former mayor of Arkansas City, nominated Schweer for the local Jaycees award. "Being named the Cowley County winner was a complete surprise," Schweer says. "Mayor Jennings worked with my wife, Shantell, to assemble the application and I was completely unaware of the effort."

After winning the local level, Schweer's application was forwarded to the state level, where he received the Kansas Outstanding Educator Award and thereby became eligible to apply for the TOYA program.

"It is an honor just to be nominated," says Schweer, "particularly because it came from Mayor Jennings. To have someone in

his position interested in our program and what we are doing with young people is wonderful."

## Community Impact

"As mayor and founder of the Center for Education of Youth and Family, I advocated excellence in education," says Jennings. "The most precious asset to be cultivated in any community is young minds. I saw the effort Matt was making and the impact he was having on young people. About 40 percent of our economy is agriculture. Matt is having a tremendous impact on solidifying the long-term viability of our community through the work he's doing with our young people. I wanted him to know how much I appreciated his efforts, which go far above and beyond what is required."

Schweer says much of the credit for this award is due to others. "I am surrounded by people who are just as deserving of this award as I am," he says. "Great teaching partners, hard-working students, solid administrative support and a great community made this award possible. I truly feel that the award belongs to the community. I was just fortunate to be the one who got to go to California and receive it."

## Professional Accomplishments

Under Schweer's leadership, the Arkansas City FFA Chapter has become one of the largest in the state and has excelled in a number of career development events, including livestock, meats, poultry and parliamentary procedure. In



Michael Faller, US Junior Chamber of Commerce president, presents Matt Schweer with his award as Dr. Richard Pellegrino, TOYA Alumni director looks on.

addition, 26 students have received the American FFA Degree, and one was elected to national FFA office.

Schweer is active in the National Association of Agricultural Educators and was named one of the NAAE's Outstanding Young Members in 2000. He and his teaching partners, Jacob Larison and Cory Epler, received the NAAE Outstanding Agricultural Education Program Award in 2001.

The Ten Outstanding Young Americans (TOYA) project exists to honor ten Americans each year who exemplify the best attributes of the nation's young people, aged 21 through 39. Winners are selected on their achievements or contributions in at least three of the following areas: personal improvement or accomplishment; financial success or economic innovation; social improvement to major contemporary problems; philanthropic contribution or voluntary service; politics or government service; scientific or technological contributions; legal reform; cultural achievement (literature, history, education, arts); academic leadership or accomplishment; success in the influence of public opinion; any other important contribution to the community, state or nation.

To learn more about the U.S. Junior Chamber or the TOYA project, visit [www.usjaycees.org](http://www.usjaycees.org). Budweiser and Coca-Cola sponsor the TOYA project.

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**Visit our website** to download an application form at [www.ffa.org/programs/ncfarmer/index](http://www.ffa.org/programs/ncfarmer/index) or call us toll free at 1-888-332-2668. **Hurry, the deadline is February 21, 2004!** If a student you refer applies to the New Century Farmer program, you will receive a \$50 gift certificate for FFA merchandise and educational resources!



The National FFA Organization and Pioneer, a DuPont Company, are paving the way for you to become a New Century Farmer.



# Celebrating FFA History with Gus Douglass

**f** FA has provided thousands of young men and women with countless opportunities in its 75-year history. The organization has also functioned as a springboard for many who have gone on to serve our country in any number of ways. Gus Douglass is one of those individuals who epitomizes the final line in the FFA motto, "Living to Serve."

Douglass, who hails from Mason County, West Virginia, grew up on a farm 18 miles from Point Pleasant, where he attended school. Douglass joined FFA as a freshman on the advice of his basketball coach, who saw the young man's potential.

"I became involved in the organization and my advisor, Clifford Dunn, pushed me into things to help me develop my potential, Douglass says. "He took me to the local Kiwanis Club and told me to explain FFA. I wasn't much of a public speaker, but he believed in me and pushed me to excel."

Excel Douglass did, serving as a chapter officer, as his school's student council president and then moving up to the state level. He was named West Virginia's state star farmer, served as state president, then was elected national FFA president. Douglass presided over the Victory Convention in 1947, when FFA celebrated the end of World War II and recognized the 260,450 FFA members who fought so courageously, and the 7,188 members who had made the ultimate sacrifice.

But that's only where the story begins. Douglass had made many friends during his term of service, including Roy Cuff, editor of the Kansas City Star, Allis Chalmers, the executives at International Harvester, Ray Firestone and John Kraft. After the convention, Douglass was planning to

return home, go back to work on the farm and marry his sweetheart, Anna Lee.

His Kansas City friends thought he should get married in their city, so during the convention, they made all of the arrangements. Allis Chalmers went to a judge to secure a special exemption from the required waiting period for a marriage license. International Harvester provided the limousine. FFA Executive Secretary A.W. Tenney gave the bride away. National FFA vice president Bob Taylor of Oregon served as best man and the flowers from the convention stage decorated the Westport Presbyterian Church on Oct. 25, 1947, when Gus and Anna Lee exchanged their vows.

Douglass returned to the farm with his bride in tow and began working the family fields. It wasn't long before he received word from his friends at International Harvester that a dealership was available in his area. He scraped together the required funds and started an equipment business, which soon grew to include a white goods line (appliances) and a Firestone Tires dealership.

The business was successful, but took a serious toll on Douglass' health. "One day a fellow came along and offered me too much, so I took it and returned to the farm so I could spend more time with Anna Lee and our four children," Douglass says.

Not long after he returned to the farm, opportunity came knocking again. The state's assistant commissioner of agriculture had resigned, and the commissioner wanted Douglass to fill the seat. He accepted and was soon working side-by-side with the commissioner. When the commissioner became ill, Douglass essentially ran the department.

"My father had always told me to never get involved in politics," Douglass chuckles. "I was strongly encouraged to run for the commissioner's seat when the election rolled around, and I'm sure Dad rolled



over in his grave when I placed my name on that ballot."

Douglass was successful in that election and eight succeeding ones. With 32 years of service, he is now the longest-serving commissioner of agriculture in the United States. In addition to his duties as commissioner, he currently chairs the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture's Advisory Committee on International Foreign Animal and Poultry Diseases, representing state departments of agriculture.

"I recently chaired a meeting in Idaho where we were discussing the BSE incident in Canada and whether or not we should lift the beef import restrictions," Douglass recalls. "After the meeting, a gentlemen approached me and asked if I had been in FFA. I indicated I had, and he said he could tell it from my parliamentary procedure skills and the way I had managed the meeting. You see, I'm still using those skills I learned all those years ago from my FFA advisor. I would not be where I am today without the counsel and advice he provided."

Douglass continues, "Every time I have the opportunity to speak with FFA advisors, I take it. In my estimation, these men and women are the chosen few with the most important task. They are the ones who counsel our young people and develop them into the future of our country."

Along Douglass' amazing career path, he also found time to help organize the National FFA Alumni Association and served as its first president in 1972. This amazing man truly lives to serve.

# Living the Legacy as FFA Celebrates 75 Years

**a** record number of FFA members, advisors and guests converged on Louisville, Ky., for the 2003 National FFA Convention. When announced from the secretary's station the official count of 51,338 attendees brought forth an approving roar from the crowd.

From the opening Reflections session on Wednesday evening, to the closing gavel Saturday afternoon, the convention overflowed with energy, excitement and educational opportunities.

## Words of Wisdom

The carefully selected panel of keynote speakers delivered powerful messages to those assembled in Freedom Hall.



Robin Roberts of ABC News' *Good Morning America* program applauded members for their participation in FFA and for positioning themselves for success by attending the convention.



"I love your passion, your enthusiasm," Roberts said. "It's Halloween tonight and I know a lot of your classmates are at parties and doing other things. You are here positioning yourself for success. You are making the necessary sacrifices to be successful."

Lowell Catlett, futurist, New Mexico State University professor and former national FFA officer, encouraged members to look for economic opportunities in serving the aging U.S. population. He also shed light on the overall economy and technologies to watch.

"The United States has an \$11 trillion economy," Catlett expounded. "There is an affluence in this country that staggers the imagination. I'm not saying that everyone is rich, just that many Americans have a little extra after they've covered the basics. That's why we can stand in line for 15 minutes to buy a \$4 latte at Starbucks. If you couple that affluence with the trend toward health products in this country, you can benefit. If it's packaged right, nutrition sells. Health sells. Those of you who produce and market food can benefit from these trends."

While those who attended the convention received the full force of its activities, those who didn't get to travel to Louisville can take advantage of many of the keynote addresses delivered from the convention stage via the FFA website. All of the keynote addresses and each of the national officers' retiring addresses are available online as MP3 files. Click on [[www.ffa.org/convention/html/hgl\\_audio.html](http://www.ffa.org/convention/html/hgl_audio.html)] to browse the audio files.

## Stars Over America

The stars shone brightly from the FFA stage on Thursday evening, as four members stepped forward to receive the organization's highest honors. There are four star categories—agriscience, agricultural placement, agribusiness and farmer—with four national finalists in each category. Each of the 16 finalists submitted extensive American FFA Degree applications and participated in a grueling interview process with a panel of judges in Louisville.



The 2003 American Star in Agriscience is Amanda Beyer of the Waupaca, Wis., FFA Chapter. An interest in wildlife sparked by her father fueled the fire for Beyer, 20, to research, improve and educate others in bluebird and other animal conservation. Her interest piqued at a young age and the alarming decline of many animal species led Beyer to develop a strong desire to protect native habitats. Her studies have taken her across the globe, with trips to and career exploration in Central America and New Zealand. Beyer is majoring in wildlife and pre-veterinary medicine at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

Erik Blaser of the Oconto Falls, Wis., FFA Chapter was named the 2003 American Star in Agricultural Placement. Blaser knows that life as a dairy farmer is hard work—he's been performing those job responsibilities since he was a young boy. The 22-year-old native of Gillett has logged more than 22,000 hours of career placement work since he began keeping FFA records four years ago. As assistant herdsman, Blaser is responsible for feeding, fieldwork, herd health and recordkeeping on his family's dairy farm.

The 2003 American Star Farmer is Orrin Holle of the Atwood, Kan., FFA Chapter. This native of Oberlin, Kan., purchases and breeds yearling heifers, allowing him to raise a cow for around \$650, then see its value increase to \$1,100. Holle's operation consists of more than 100 feeder calves and 900 acres of farm ground. He has learned to produce profitable, high-quality crops by relying on eco-fallow practices such as growing dryland corn in wheat stubble to take advantage of sub-soil moisture. Holle is majoring in agricultural economics at Kansas State University.



Joshua Zeithamer of the Alexandria, Minn., FFA Chapter was named the 2003 American Star in Agribusiness. Bio Builder Inc., Zeithamer's company, manufactures and distributes specialty, phosphorus-free fertilizers and performs other agronomic services. In 2001, Zeithamer used his fertilizer concept to begin creating mixtures that provide outstanding growing results for his professional customers. Zeithamer took the fertilizer concept one step further by formulating the mixture completely out of renewable resources from Minnesota. Bio Builder Inc. also wholesales grass seed and erosion control products to complement its fertilizer sales. The company offers aerification services to golf courses and sports fields which also adds to sales of the company's "Thrivin'" line of fertilizers. Zeithamer is majoring in business administration at North Dakota State University.

The Stars Over America Program is co-sponsored by DuPont, Co. and the USDA Farm Service Agency as a special project of the National FFA Foundation, and by the National FFA Foundation.

## Agriscience Teacher of the Year

Owen Mark Thomason of Martin, Georgia, was named the 2003 Agriscience Teacher of the Year. When the Franklin County High School teacher and advisor of the Franklin County FFA Chapter noticed that the local community was changing from traditional production agriculture farms to hobby farms and urban flight, Thomason began looking for new ways to attract students.

Aquaculture was the solution. "Students enter my class expecting the traditional cow, pig and crops curriculum," Thomason said. "They leave knowing that experimentation, current events and analytical thinking are part of our progressive agriculture department"

The Agriscience Teacher of the Year award recognizes outstanding agriculture teachers who emphasize technology in

their curriculum. The program is sponsored by PotashCorp as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

## Agriscience Student of the Year

An interest in alternative fuels paid off for Grant A. Lewis, a member of the Delavan, Ill., FFA Chapter, when he was named the 2003 FFA Agriscience Student of the Year. Lewis's continuing research focuses on the effect of using ethanol in small engines and determining the most efficient way for it to be used.

Lewis received a total of \$3,500 in cash scholarships and a plaque for being named the national winner. The Agriscience Student Scholarship and Recognition Program is sponsored by Monsanto as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

## H.O. Sargent Diversity Awards

Jenifer Ann Woodward, a member of the South Rowan FFA Chapter in China Grove, N.C., took home the H.O. Sargent Diversity Member Award for her work in diversity issues. The award recognizes an FFA member who develops ways to reach underrepresented individuals or groups that have not yet been able to enjoy the benefits of agricultural education and FFA activities.

When Woodward discovered a group of students in her high school were being left out, she took action. In a room adjacent to the agriculture classrooms was a group of mentally and physically handicapped students. Using her fellow members as tutors, Woodward shared weekly agriculture lessons with the students. Woodward's FFA advisors are David Cress and David Overcash.

Jamie Cano, Russell Graves and Donald Reid each received an H.O. Sargent Diversity Non-Member Award. Cano, who

is from Hillard, Ohio, was denied the opportunity to enroll in agriculture in high school due to his ethnic background. That didn't diminish his love for the subject matter or his belief in the importance of inclusion. This Ohio State University professor launched the Hispanic Action Plan, chaired the first multicultural task force for the National FFA Organization, and was instrumental in developing the Spanish version of the *Official FFA Manual*.

Russell Graves of Childress, Texas, revised his program's curriculum to center around communication and leadership skills along with natural resource management. As a result, the program has grown from having only one female enrolled in 1993 to having full gender equity today. The ethnic composition of the program has grown as well and now mirrors that of the school.

Donald Reid of Louisville, Ky., wanted to develop strategies to improve the academic achievement of minorities. He designed a hands-on learning program to introduce students to agricultural education and agricultural careers. Today, the Seneca agricultural education program has 250 students from a wide range of cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

The H.O. Sargent Diversity Award program is sponsored by Monsanto as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

## National Chapter Models of Innovation

The nation's top 10 three-star gold chapters in the National Chapter Award program compete in each of the award's three divisions to be named model of innovation winners.



## Student Development

The Blanchester FFA Chapter, of Blanchester, Ohio, was named the Student Development Model of Innovation winner. Of the chapter's 156 members, 72 participated in leadership activities beyond the local level. As part of their award-winning effort, members:

- developed and implemented a "Student of the Quarter" recognition program
- mentored 27 fourth-grade students through the PALS program
- implemented a "Big Brother and Big Sister" mentoring program to connect first-year FFA members with chapter officers and senior members
- collected more than 1,000 food items, 919 non-perishable items and \$2,721 in cash to purchase additional food items for the Glenn Thompson Memorial Food Drive; the chapter worked with the local Rotary Club to assist 153 families

## Chapter Development

The Garretson FFA Chapter of South Dakota was named the Chapter Development Model of Innovation winner. As part of their work toward this award, members:

- conducted a "Sell What You Grow" project in which members learned about value-added projects
- used the knowledge gained to orchestrate a fund-raising activity
- exceeded their goals in selling soy, corn, cheese and meat products
- celebrated the chapter's 50th anniversary through window displays, a booth at the state fair and recognizing past members at a basketball game
- published 32 articles about the chapter in local, regional and state newspapers

## Community Development

The Brooksville Senior FFA Chapter of Hernando High School in Brooksville, Fla., was named the Community Development Model of Innovation winner. As part of their work toward this award, members:

- participated in "Operation PRIDE," a county-wide program promoting community development
- Raised more than \$1,500 for the Angelus House for the Developmentally Handicapped

- Donated more than 900 hours of labor to the Hernando County Cattlemen's Rodeo to set up bleachers, work the concession stands and manage the event's trash removal effort

## Middle School

The Suwannee Middle School FFA Chapter of Live Oak, Fla., was selected as the 2003 Outstanding Middle School Program. The chapter has 113 members. One of the chapter's goals was to involve 50 percent of its members in some form of competition. The chapter competed in 14 career development events and all but two competed at the state level. The opening/closing ceremonies team placed first in the district and was named the state champion.

During National FFA Week, the Suwannee chapter had 100 percent of its members participate in activities. During the week, the chapter hosted a faculty breakfast and chapter members promoted their events on a local morning television program. In addition, the chapter collected 1,200 cans of food for Vivid Visions, a domestic abuse center that distributed the food to families in need.

Cargill and the Land O'Lakes Foundation sponsor the National Chapter Award program and the Models of Innovation awards as special projects of the National FFA Foundation.

## Career Show

Always an area bustling with activity, the FFA National Agricultural Career Show provided something for everyone. With more than 400 booths, each exhibitor competed for the attention of the 50,000 members who passed through the show with bright colors, flyers and interesting personalities.

The U.S. Marine Corps took an unusual approach. Crowds flocked to a bright red Humvee for the "Pull Up Challenge." Members could win posters, key chains, water bottles or t-shirts for participating. While the Marines' goal is to recruit members, they also attend the convention to promote awareness of the military and its purpose.

Chevrolet had one of the most popular booths in the Career Show. The company brought in country music stars to sign autographs and perform acoustically. Some of the personalities include Darryl Worley, Joe Nichols and Jo Dee Messina. They also had the Vortec Power challenge for youth to test their strength.

At the Hobart booth, students could practice their welding skills to win prizes. Members were asked to weld a 4-inch bead using MIG welding equipment. A winner was selected each day of the show to receive a Hobart auto-darkening helmet.

## Record Level of Financial Support

For the 38th consecutive year, the National FFA Foundation set a record level of support raised for FFA and agricultural education programs. At the 2003 National FFA Convention, 2003 FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board Chairman Gerald W. Brase announced the foundation had raised a total of \$8,701,682 to support annual projects and programs for FFA and agricultural education—an all-time record.

Brase, senior vice president, merchandising and marketing, Tractor Supply Company, says the record contributions from more than 1,500 sponsors help prepare future agricultural leaders. "FFA is committed to providing programs and opportunities for America's young people

that will forge the values we so desperately need to insure the future success of our great country and the democratic principles upon which it is built," Brase says. "Current FFA members are the leaders of tomorrow."





Brase introduced 2004 FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board Chairman-Elect John Rakestraw, president and chief executive officer, Contibeef LLC. Rakestraw announced the 2004 foundation theme, "FFA Securing the Legacy."

In addition to raising more than \$8 million, the Foundation recognized John Deere and Monsanto for their long-standing support.

Robert Lane, chairman and CEO of John Deere, accepted an award recognizing 60 years of sustained support for FFA and agricultural education. A main focus of John Deere's donations has been the Farm Business Management Career Development Event. Other special gifts include support for the I Believe in the Future capital campaign, the LifeKnowledge initiative and the 75<sup>th</sup> Reconnect Campaign.

In addition to sponsoring FFA activities, John Deere helps support other agriculture-related events and organizations, including the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE), the National Young Farmer Education Association (NYFEA) and the National FFA Alumni Association.

Glen Stith, vice president of Monsanto, accepted an award for 50 years of sustained support of FFA and agricultural education. Monsanto's contributions to FFA have focused on science education in agriculture. The company has supported career development events through its subsidiary companies DeKalb Seeds, Protiva, Asgrow and the Monsanto Animal Health Company.

Monsanto has also made special gifts to support Leadership in a New Millennium for membership growth and enhancement; I Believe in the Future capital

campaign; agriscience and biotechnology instructional materials; Diversity in Agricultural Education programming; the H.O. Sargent Diversity Award program; and the Seeking Solutions Project.

Since 1944, the National FFA Foundation, through the support of its generous corporate and individual donors, has raised more than \$130 million to develop curriculum, fund programs and recognize FFA members with awards and scholarships.

## Alumni Auction

With its theme "More Fun Than a Barrel of Monkeys: Come Have a Barrel of Fun," the National FFA Alumni Association's annual auction was swinging this year.

During Friday evening's live auction, John Rose of Tennessee won the bid on the fully equipped 2004 Chevy Silverado with an offer of \$30,000. The auction grossed more than \$88,000. The funds raised will be used to sponsor Washington Leadership Conference scholarships as well as the local chapter grant program.

## Time Capsule

A primary focus of each convention session was filling a new time capsule with memorabilia. Each state delegation prepared a box of memorabilia that the state president gently placed in the time capsule during the convention sessions. The time capsule will be opened in 2027 at the 100<sup>th</sup> National FFA Convention and the boxes will be presented to the respective state delegations at that time.

## National Officers

The national officers executed their duties in an exemplary fashion. Always crowd favorites, the text and an audio file (MP3) of each officer's retiring address can be found online at [www.ffa.org/convention/html/hgl\_index.html]. These addresses make great tools for students' personal



development and also for those interested in improving their speaking skills.

## New Officer Team

At the final convention session, the delegates elected a new slate of officers to serve in the upcoming year. The organization made history by electing its first-ever president from Puerto Rico. The new officers are:

- President: Javier Moreno, P.R.
- Secretary: Stacia Christine Berry, Wyo.
- Eastern Region Vice President: Anne Knapke, Ohio
- Southern Region Vice President: Christy Windham, Miss.
- Central Region Vice President: Amy Rasmussen, Neb.
- Western Region Vice President: Casey Hogan, Texas

For more information on the new officers, visit [www.ffa.org/convention/html/hgl\_index.html].

## Additional Awards and Information

As always, this year's national FFA convention was overflowing with excitement, opportunity, fun and life-changing events that will never be adequately captured on paper. To truly understand and appreciate the convention, one must experience the sights and sounds in person.

To relive the convention experience, or for additional convention information, including photos and complete lists of award winners and degree recipients, visit [www.ffa.org/convention/index.html].



# Alumni Creating Volunteer Management Initiative

**t**he goal of the National FFA Organization and the FFA Alumni is to create a sustainable volunteer management plan for local chapters. The desired result is to have organized volunteer groups in 50 percent of all existing agricultural education programs and to have a ratio of one volunteer for every four students. The following are the specific initiatives and deliverables/actions planned for the next couple of years:



By Frank Saldaña  
Executive Director  
National FFA Alumni Association

## Initiatives & Actions

### 1. Develop a baseline of local volunteers/support groups

- A. Random samples of chapter rosters
- B. Telephone surveys to local teachers to determine what kind of volunteer groups are out there

### 2. Develop promising practices on volunteer management in local programs

- A. Assemble ideas from Alumni Awards Application
- B. Develop web pages and feature in teacher publications

### 3. Develop training modules for teachers on working with advisory boards, boosters and alumni

- A. Work with LPS group to develop and deliver
- B. Make available to state staff and teacher educators
- C. Begin delivery in summer of 2004

### 4. Develop materials that define the role of alumni/volunteers in agricultural education

- A. Develop introductory brochures
- B. Focus on FFA, SAE, classroom advocacy, fundraising, etc.

### 5. Develop volunteer management resources on recruitment, retention and recognition strategies

- A. Work within LPS System
- B. Deliver on LPS CD-ROM
- C. Develop national volunteer award (Follow the HO Sargent Diversity Award model)

### 6. Develop Train the Trainer modules

- A. Work with LPS Group to support 3, 4 and 5 deliverables
- B. Focus on in-service and pre-service opportunities

### 7. Develop stronger ties to other volunteer organizations for resources, support and recognition opportunities

- A. Work with Foundation and division directors
- B. Identify 2-3 key organizations
- C. Involve as presenter in alumni/volunteerism activities at national FFA convention
- D. Plan toward volunteerism summit at national FFA convention in '04

The National FFA Organization and the National FFA Alumni Association are committed on this major strategy to rally the resources to mobilize legions of volunteers to support all areas of agricultural education/FFA with emphasis at the local program level. Creating effective local partnerships, of which alumni/volunteers are part, is one of the seven keys to Local Program Success. For more information on these initiatives, contact [www.alumni.ffa.org].



# AG TEACHERS WANTED!




With the constant evolving face of agriculture, it has become increasingly important for agriculture industries to prepare for challenges of the future. As agriculture educators, meeting those needs begin with you, both in the classroom and through your external pursuits.

Through the Jerome Foundation, FFA Global has scholarships available for teachers who want to expand their knowledge in global field research. EARTHWATCH puts people in the field where they develop a deeper understanding of their role in developing a sustainable future.

To learn more about the EARTHWATCH organization and the expeditions, visit [www.earthwatch.org](http://www.earthwatch.org). For more information on the scholarship, call FFA Global at 317-802-4309 or e-mail [global@ffa.org](mailto:global@ffa.org). Applications are due Feb. 1, 2004. Scholarship applications, along with more information on teacher resources, are available at [www.ffa.org/programs/global](http://www.ffa.org/programs/global).



# Developing a Sense of Belonging through Volunteerism

**O**ne of the main reason students join clubs is for the sense of belonging and being able to give of themselves. Conversely, one reason student don't continue their membership in organizations such as FFA is because they are not included or don't feel part of the chapter.

Four years ago, the Greene County Tech (GCT) Primary School created an outreach program to nurture children's social and academic growth through community volunteers. The program strives to improve student performance and self-esteem while raising their achievement levels. It also provides many avenues of involvement for FFA members.

A state grant funded the Parent Involvement Center. The school district currently funds the center's coordinator. Due to the lack of funds for the center's programs, local FFA alumni and FFA members have generously given to the center through their monetary donations and volunteer service. Without this support, our program would not exist today.

## Tutoring Program

The Center's Tutoring Program brings community volunteers into the school once or twice weekly for 30 minutes to tutor students one-on-one. The program purchases resource materials for use in the tutoring sessions. FFA alumni and college students serve as volunteer tutors.

## Lunch Buddies

A Lunch Buddy program was developed to build children's self-esteem. In the last two years, 52 FFA members served as lunch buddies to primary and intermediate students once or twice a week. Both

high school and elementary students have benefited from the visits. Primary students spend quality time each week with a "big sister" or "big brother." Their self-esteem soars from the attention the older students



provide. The high school students build a sense of responsibility, learning how to manage and express their feelings. They also gain a greater sense of awareness of other students' needs.

We have found that primary children tell older students things they won't share with adults. This provides an avenue for counselors to understand and discuss potential issues with the children before they become problems.

## Kuts for Kids

Kuts for Kids is a new program designed to provide free haircuts to children in need during the school year. Licensed beauticians within the community volunteer their services to the school on a monthly basis. The program began out of a hygienic need and blossomed into a self-esteem booster for children. Funds from the GCT FFA Alumni purchased initial program supplies for the primary and intermediate buildings.



## Clothing Depot

The largest of the center's programs is the Clothing Depot. The depot serves the needs of the entire school campus. It provides replacement clothing and shoes for children who experience playground, lunchroom, bathroom and any other accidents that occur during the school day. The depot provides a resource for families experiencing financial difficulties by supplying clothing and other items to needy families.

"We feel that we are providing the basics and encouraging good grooming and from that comes self-esteem," Murry explains. "We started the depot with \$100, one clothing rack and six candy boxes. An Alumni member donated a dressing screen so the children could try on their selected clothes. FFA members cleaned a gymnasium storage room for the intermediate clothes depot.

Our state review was great. We currently have several surrounding schools developing programs modeled after ours. The Parent Involvement Center has the continual support of FFA Alumni, FFA members, school administrators and community volunteers. It is a great way to connect FFA members with others in their school and community.

*By Rebecca Murry, Parent Involvement Center Coordinator, and Pamela Jumper, Greene County Tech Primary School Volunteer*  
Paragould, Arkansas

# TeacherResources

## 2004 FFA Scholarship Application

The 2004 Scholarship guidebook and application have been mailed to all FFA advisors and guidance counselor offices. If you did not receive a copy of the scholarship book/application, please contact the scholarship office to request one. Students will also be able to download the application from [ffa.org](http://ffa.org) at [<http://www.ffa.org/programs/schapp/index.html>] in December. All scholarship applications must be postmarked by Feb. 15, 2004.

## 2003–2004 National FFA Catalogs in the Mail

The 2003-04 FFA merchandise materials have been mailed. This includes the blue (apparel & gift catalog), the gold (awards & supply catalog), the Agricultural Education Resources Catalog, a flyer on nationally sanctioned fundraisers and information on the annual T-shirt contest. These materials represent the best FFA has to offer members, advisors and state staff alike! If you have not yet received your merchandise materials and catalogs, please contact Lee Anne Shiller, [[lshiller@ffa.org](mailto:lshiller@ffa.org)] and FFA will rush a package to you.

## Request for Applications

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) announces a call for applications for the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program (SPEC). Applications must be received by close of business Jan. 14, 2004 (5:00 p.m., EST).

The SPEC program seeks to: (a) promote and strengthen secondary education and two-year postsecondary education in agriscience and agribusiness to help ensure the existence

in the United States of a qualified workforce to serve the food and agricultural sciences system; and (b) promote complementary and synergistic linkages among secondary, two-year postsecondary, and higher education programs in the food and agricultural sciences to advance excellence in education and encourage more young Americans to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the food and agricultural sciences. Applications may be submitted by public secondary schools or community colleges (restrictions apply).

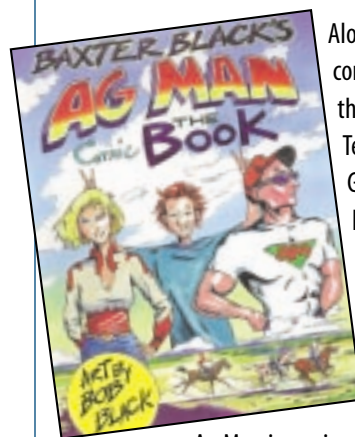
For the entire Request for Applications document, including mailing addresses and contact information, click on [[www.reeusda.gov/1700/funding/rfaspec.htm](http://www.reeusda.gov/1700/funding/rfaspec.htm)]. A complete set of required forms must accompany the application. For questions, please contact: Mr. P. Gregory Smith, National Program Leader, CSREES/Higher Education Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 2251, 1400 Independence Ave., S.W. Washington, D.C. 20250-2251; phone: 202-720-1973; fax: 202-720-2030; e-mail: [[gsmith@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:gsmith@csrees.usda.gov)].

## Curriculum Materials Service to Distribute AAVIM Products

Recently, a unique partnership was formed between the Curriculum Materials Service (CMS) and the American Association of Vocational Instructional Materials (AAVIM). As a result, all AAVIM products are now available from CMS. The product catalog numbers and prices remain the same. These products are described on the CMS web site. For a complete listing of AAVIM products available through CMS, click on [[www-cms.ag.ohio-state.edu/4DACTION/WEB\\_InventorySubjectsDisplay/AAVIM](http://www-cms.ag.ohio-state.edu/4DACTION/WEB_InventorySubjectsDisplay/AAVIM)].

## Baxter Black's Ag Man Comic Book Available

Based on the premise that 21st Century agricultural education is more than "just feeding your pig," Ag Man comics utilize Baxter's unique sense of humor to introduce controversial and sensitive topics that impact the agriculture industry. They present stimulating topics in a digestible format for classroom study and discussion that covers the broad spectrum of agriculture's impact and challenges in a world of famine, politics, technology, increased production and bio-terrorism.



Along with the comic book there is a Teacher's Guide that highlights the key components of these issues.

Ag Man is arming students with the facts, so that they are able to respond intelligently and reasonably to biased accusations when they hear the misinformed use modern agriculture as a scapegoat.

You can download a sample Ag Man issue and teacher's guide on [ffa.org](http://ffa.org) at [<http://www.ffa.org/html/teacherindex.html>]. To order the comic books, visit [[www.baxterblack.com](http://www.baxterblack.com)].



## Harris Family Finds Justice

In March 1997, the family of National FFA Executive Secretary Coleman Harris experienced a tragic loss. Harris' 17-year-old daughter, Ann Marie, was shot and killed as she sat in the back of a friend's car, while visiting a friend in Tacoma, Wash. The 1998 murder trial ended in an exasperating acquittal. However, the detectives, prosecutors and the Harris family didn't give up. After a prolonged perjury battle, four young men from the Tacoma area were found guilty of perjury and conspiracy to commit perjury.

Coleman and his wife, Jean, both spoke at the sentencing in April 2003. Jean had brought to the courtroom a hand-made bell pull, with the word "justice" embroidered prominently. Displaying the bell pull, she said, "Bell pulls were used in the 18th century to summon help. Many people were summoned to help in this case, and we are here to salute them—they are the warriors for justice." The Harris family recognized a number of people who had worked on the case with hand-made bell pulls.

The man who had confessed to pulling the trigger, then recanted, received a 15-year sentence. Another friend received a 10-year sentence, while the other two men each received five-year sentences. The ordinary range for perjury sentences is 12 to 24 months. These sentences were handed down because the perjury had resulted in such an extraordinary miscarriage of justice. The Harris family has finally received a measure of justice and a long-awaited sense of peace.

## T-Shirt Design Contest

The third annual FFA t-shirt design contest entries are due March 15, 2004. FFA is looking for some creative students to submit their designs. Winning designs will be featured on t-shirts sold in the 2004-2005 National FFA Blue Catalog and online store. Encourage

your FFA members to submit all those fabulous designs that have been produced at the local level. If their design is selected, your chapter will earn 50 percent of the gross profits on the catalog sales for one year. As of the end of August, the five winning chapters from the '02-'03 contest had earned a total of \$3,294.13, with the top chapter earning nearly \$1,400. And this year's winners are on a record-setting pace. The number one selling T-shirt, 03-WOAG, has already earned \$2,277. See the 2003-2004 winners in this year's blue catalog (p. 16-17). For more information, please contact Dawn Sharp, [dsharp@ffa.org].

## Risk Management Contest

Enter the 2004 Risk Management Writing Contest! FFA members can win an all-expense paid trip to Washington D.C. when they enter the 2004 Risk Management Writing Contest!

Encourage your members to write a personal essay of no less than 1,000 words on the topic of risk management strategies used in a supervised agricultural experience program (SAE) and send it to the National FFA Center. Students should analyze the risks involved in their SAE, describe their risk management strategies and indicate which tools were used to minimize risk and how they were applied.

All entries must be postmarked by Jan. 31, 2004. Ten lucky winners and their advisors will receive an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., where they will meet with top U.S. Department of Agriculture officials and tour our nation's capital. A resource guide and contest rules will be mailed to all chapters in December; contest information and last year's winning essays are posted on [ffa.org](http://ffa.org). Questions? Contact the Risk Management Writing Contest program coordinator at 317-802-4288.

## Free Sheep Flock for FFA Members

The American Polypay Sheep Association is starting a new program. The recipient will receive two ewe lambs and one yearling ewe, plus \$100 buying credit to use at the 2004 National Polypay Sale. This program is for any FFA or 4-H member in the United States between the ages of 8-19.

The National Show and Sale, held in Springfield, Ill., every June, is the highlight of the Polypay show season. A tremendous Junior show is held in conjunction with the sale. This junior show has grown each year. It is competitive fun for kids and family members alike. The Junior Show has all of the major classes and a very popular futurity class. A futurity ewe is purchased as a ewe lamb and exhibited in the futurity class the next year as a yearling. One of the ewe lambs to be given away will be futurity nominated for the 2005 show.

The Polypay uses NSIP (National Sheep Improvement Program). This program uses EPD's (Expected Progeny Differences) to measure the production of sheep. The traits that are measured are weaning weight, maternal milk, milk and growth, post weaning weight and numbers born. The association will waive the first year NSIP fee if recipient enrolls in NSIP. The winning recipient is not required to join the NSIP program.

Find out more about the Polypay breed at [[www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds](http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds)] or at [[www.polypay.org](http://www.polypay.org)]. If one of your students would like to start a new flock or increase their flock with Polypay genetics, Sammons Polypay would like to help.

For an entry form, contact Gordon Sammons, Sammons Polypay, 17295 Hwy 82, Geneseo, IL 61254, [[sammons@theinter.com](mailto:sammons@theinter.com)]. The entry deadline is March 1, 2004.



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