



Javier Moreno National Officer Journal

Thursday, September 30, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Tennessee and Puerto Rico

The people in Kentucky do know how to have fun. I arrived into the Lexington, Blue Grass Airport on Tuesday afternoon and my friend Jamie Sparrow picked me up in baggage claim. Later that night we met with Matt, Bryan, Brittany, Heather, Sarah and some other former FFA members from Ky. I had a great time learning more about KY FFA, and its members. Wednesday was a great day to relax and to work on convention planning, as I spent the day in my hotel room. That evening we went to a restaurant downtown Lexington called Ramcey's. I had some good meat loaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, and of course, fried okra. There I was able to hang out with some other cool people like Lindsay, Sarah, Josh and Dr. Pieter. Thursday was a little bit more intense. At 8:30



in the morning we were on our way to the Kentucky Leadership Center about two and a half hours away. We all had a great time at the UK – FFA Leadership Conference that's offered by the University of Kentucky every fall. I was able to speak on behalf of FFA, and to spend some valuable time with many FFA members. After getting back to Lexington, many of us went out for dinner at an Italian restaurant. I don't think they were expecting us there, as the server seemed a little bit overwhelmed by our presence. But we didn't panic. Lindsay decided that she was going to be the breadstick girl for the night, and she took good care of us.

Friday was a very special day. Cecilia, also a student at UK, took me to her hometown in Bourbon County very early in the morning. We had one mission: to visit Claiborne Farm. That's right, Claiborne! For those of you who are knowledgeable about the equine industry, you



may recognize this name because many Triple Crown winners such as Monarchos, Round Table, Pulpit, and of course, Secretariat once belonged or are still part of this beautiful farm. I was also very surprised to find out that the world-known horse Sea Biscuit was born on this farm many years ago! Unfortunately, the owners of the farm decided to get rid of him, because he wasn't a very promising looking horse. If you watched the movie, then you have heard of Claiborne Farm before. This wasn't the only surprise about



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the farm though. When we got there, there were about 20 members of the Bourbon County FFA waiting for us to tour the farm. Gus, chapter president, and one of Cecilia's brothers, gave us a warm welcome to the area.

After visiting the farm, we headed back to UK for the second UK-FFA Leadership Conference. About 300 FFA members gathered there to learn about current issues in the agricultural industry, impromptu speaking, the fish philosophy, and many other topics of importance. I had to leave the conference early, as I had to catch a plane to Louisiana. Next week I get to spend some time in Nashville for the Tractor Supply Company National Conference. I will also have a chance to go back home, Puerto Rico, to spend some time with my family.

Thursday, September 23, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Tennessee and Kentucky



Sunday night I flew from Indiana to Pennsylvania so that I could see the doctor on Monday morning. The doctor had nothing but good things to say about my ankle. It looks like I'm going to be able to walk by the time the national FFA convention arrives without any help! The crutch and the cane gets a little old after awhile. Monday night I flew to St. Louis, Missouri, for some chapter visits and area conferences. Montgomery County's FFA Advisor, Mr. Whithaus, his son Matthew and Area IV Treasurer, Tyler picked me up at the

airport. After spending some quality time with Tyler's family on Tuesday morning, we headed to his school for an FFA assembly. From Montgomery Co., Mrs. Milhollin and Tyler drove me around to a few other schools. We stopped by Wellsville-Middletown H.S. and Paris FFA. In Paris I met Pedro, who joined the FFA when his family moved from Mexico to the U.S.. It was fun to hang out with Pedro because he's still learning English, so we



were able to talk in Spanish! We then drove to Centralia H.S. where Derek took me to his house for a chapter gathering. We had a BBQ with Becca, Mary, Kara, Lindsay, Neil, Sullivan, Tisha Pie, Devin, Brittany and some others.

On Wednesday morning I visited Centralia FFA. Their facilities are pretty awesome. Ryan and Kara, Area IV officers drove me around for the remainder of the day. We went to Columbia, Ashland and Mexico, Mo.. At Mexico we met with about two hundred FFA members



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for the first Area Leadership Conference. After presenting seven workshops that evening, I was ready for some good Mexican food! The area officers and I went out for Mexican and then I spent some time with the family of another area officer, Kelsey. She is a student at Van-Far H.S. and that gave us a chance to visit with many of their members. It was a little bit late, so we weren't able to spend too much time together, but it was still enjoyable. I discovered that former national officer Mark Wilburn graduated from this school. I met his mom, and many other friends of the family that live in this community.

Thursday was also a busy day as I made my way through the state of Missouri. After spending some quality time with Kelsey's family, we visited Mrs. Wilkinson at New Bloomfield. It was great to see how the students were learning about food science and animal science. I even helped with the process of making salsa! We then visited North-Callaway, where Mr. Tummons took good care of us. It is at Bowling Green HS that the second Area Leadership Conference took place. About 350 FFA members were eager to learn and to have some fun. After spending time with Julie, Christine and some of the other officers, I headed to the Area president's house for some mashed potatoes, fried chicken and green beans. Kyle's mom is an excellent cook! Robby, another area officer joined us for dinner as well.

Friday morning we made our way to Troy FFA. Holly cow... I had never seen a high school that big! We ate lunch and hung out with the FBLA members, and even talked to their Spanish class. Kyle, Robby and I then drove to Silex FFA where we met a great group of students. They were all well behaved and very attentive. Robby and Kyle then took me to the airport so that I could catch a plane to Pennsylvania. I had a great time in Missouri and can't wait to go back. I feel blessed to have met so many incredible individuals who know how to make you feel welcomed. Thank you Missouri Area IV for a great time. "Get er' done!"

In a few days I'll be going to Lexington, Kentucky, for a leadership conference. I'm looking forward to meeting everyone there!

Thursday, September 16, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Missouri, Area IV

This week brings back a lot of memories from our training as national officers back in the month of December. Rooming with Casey for a whole week, and getting to see the girls so often for such a long period of time, makes me realize how much I enjoy being a part of this team. Convention planning is in full gear, and it looks like convention is going to be amazing. My teammates and I had a chance to visit the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center in Louisville, Ky., just to get a feel of what convention is going to be like. While visiting there, I couldn't help but to feel butterflies in my stomach thinking about the power of 52,000 FFA members coming together with one purpose. After visiting KFEC, we went to the Derby Dinner and watch *Fiddler on the Roof* – the actors did a phenomenal job! There is a lot of work ahead of us as we get ready for convention, but I know that we are going to be just fine. We have great people working with us at the National FFA Center who will ensure that convention is successful.

Next week I'll get to hang out with members from Area IV in the "Show Me State," Missouri. I'm pumped to get to know these members!



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September 9, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Indianapolis for convention planning

Wow! The past few weeks have been incredible as I see how FFA grows and remains as the premier youth leadership organization in the nation. The National FFA staff just reported that FFA is at a 22 year high in membership with more than 176,000 FFA members in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. It's good to know that FFA will remain strong for decades to come. But this is possible in part because of the support we receive from our generous sponsors. Last week I had



At the FFA Day Race we were able to get a "hot pass" that allowed us to get into the pit, reserved parking, and even talk to some drivers. I had never been to a racing event before and it was awesome! From Nazareth, PA, JR and I flew to Omaha, Nebraska to meet with National Eastern Region Vice President, Anne Knapke. During our visit to Omaha we were able to visit many supporters of the FFA as well as some potential sponsors who are considering supporting the FFA. I really enjoyed visiting Farmers National, The Successful Farming Magazine, Union Pacific, Valmont, Lindsay Manufacturer, DTN, ConAgra Foods and others. On Wednesday Anne and I drove from Omaha to Des Moines, Iowa where we met with Jason Givan from the Foundation. Later that day we visited some other companies that were very excited to see what FFA is up to these days. On Thursday and Friday we visited some Animal Health Companies that support the FFA because they understand that we do a great job at educating our members regarding animal sciences. This week I've been



in Florida visiting some good friends. It's been great to catch up with everyone and to meet so many new people. I was able to survive Hurricane Frances but don't know if I could stand another hurricane in less than a week. Ivan is making its way to the Sunshine State and I don't want to be there to experience it. Make sure you keep our brothers and sisters from Florida in your thoughts and prayers as they prepare to face their fourth hurricane this season. ¡Hasta luego amigos!

Thursday, August 19, 2004



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Where I'll be next week: Pennsylvania

The past few days have been insanely busy, as we get ready for the 77th National FFA Convention. Last Thursday, my teammates and I flew into Indianapolis to begin a seven day-long journey of convention planning. We worked on scripts, our retiring addresses and some logistics for the event. Of course all of this work was just the beginning of an intense refining process that in the end will help us have a great convention. On Tuesday our team had a chance to visit Dow AgroSciences and to thank them for their support to the FFA. Mr. Doug Loudenslager, Chief Operating Officer of the FFA, took our team out for dinner on Wednesday, and then on Thursday we all had lunch with the staff members at the National FFA Center. It was so good to spend some time with those who ensure that FFA will continue to make a difference in the lives of students. We are very fortunate to have staff members that are passionate, and care about agricultural education and the FFA. Stacia Anne and Casey left town on Thursday evening, while Amy, Christy and I stayed in the area. We had a great weekend in



Indianapolis, hanging out with some staff members from the center. On Sunday afternoon the three of us, Ms. Campbell from the FFA Foundation, and Mr. Loudenslager, COO, took a road trip down to Lexington, Ky., to visit one of FFA's biggest sponsors, Toyota. My old friend Frank Davis from South Carolina, who is working as an intern for Toyota, made all the arrangements for the visit. On Monday, we visited with some FFA members from

the area, some Toyota managers, and at the end of the day, we visited a detention center called Holly Hill. There were about 17 girls there who just wanted to be loved. Just by talking to them, they felt very special. This was a great opportunity for Amy, Christy and I to see how fortunate we are, to have people that care about us. Visiting Holly Hill also reminded me of the importance of serving others. I'm in Washington, D.C., right now visiting the United States Department of Agriculture. I've had a great time learning about American agriculture and about our natural resources. Later today I'll be flying to Pennsylvania to spend some time at my second home.

Thursday, August 5, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Indianapolis, IN



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Our national officer team spent the whole weekend getting ready for the 2004 State Presidents' Conference. We had a great time working together and making it happen. Saturday night Christy, Casey and I had a chance to visit the Eisenhower Days Inn, one of the hotels where the Washington Leadership Conference took place this summer. Rain poured down on us big time... it was so much fun! Tuesday morning we finished all the details regarding SPC and in the afternoon we all had a chance to meet two state officers from each state at our opening session. It was at this session that we introduced our 2004 SPC theme: "Leading the Tradition." Later that night we went to the U.S. Capitol where we held reflections. It was a great time to be challenged for a great week and year.

On Wednesday we lead the tradition of integrity. In the afternoon we had a chance to visit Capitol Hill and many of our legislators. The state officers talked to our congressmen and women about the FFA, agriculture and education. They were great ambassadors for the agricultural industry and the FFA. Later that night we had the opportunity to tour D.C. We visited many monuments such as the Jefferson, Korean, Lincoln and WWII Memorials. We ended the day reflecting at the Iwo Jima Memorial. Thursday was unique as we explored the tradition of service. We visited Arlington Cemetery, where many of our servicemen and women rest in peace. In the afternoon we had a chance to start the delegate work that will conclude at National Convention in October. On Friday we talked about the tradition of Perseverance. We visited USDE and learned about some new FFA initiatives such as Life Knowledge as well as some USDE initiatives such as the Character Education and Civic Engagement Initiative. That night we all took the Spirit of the Potomac Cruise and celebrated everything we had achieved thus far. We ate, sang and dance all night. It was a blast! On our last day at SPC we lead the tradition of vision. Saturday was a very fun day as we got to tour D.C. on our own, and later on, go for a walk at the zoo. After visiting the zoo, we watched movies all night and played games. This concluded the 2004 State Presidents' Conference in Washington, D.C. I really enjoyed spending time with mom and dad, as well as with many state officers from all over the nation.

After SPC was over, our national officer team spent a week on a retreat. It was good to be able to get caught up with life! I'm down in Florida spending some time with some good friends. Next week our team will be able to start working on the 77th National FFA Convention. I can't wait to meet up with my teammates again!

Thursday, June 15, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Washington, D.C. for SPC

Friday was an interesting day, as it brought back many memories from our national officer training in December. I spent the whole day at the National FFA Center, getting ready for the board meeting and trying to get caught up with life. That night Melinda and T.J. Abbey took some of my teammates and I out for dinner. We had our first meeting regarding national convention planning. I can't believe we are already talking about convention! After dinner we watched a movie with some other national staff. The next few days were full of decision-making and critical thinking. I don't know about you but when it comes to critical thinking, I get a headache!

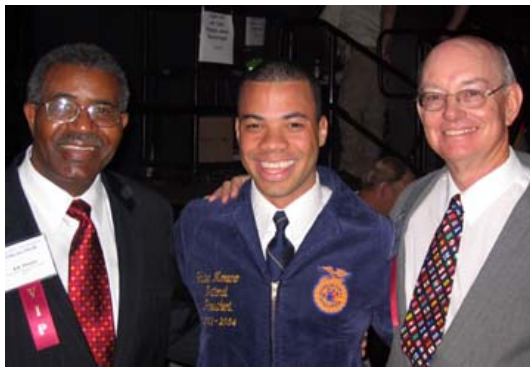


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Tuesday afternoon, right after the Board of Trustees meeting, Stacia dropped me off at the airport and off to Texas I went. Sherri, Casey's mom, picked me up at the Dallas airport and drove me straight to the convention arena in Fort Worth. The vespers had already started when I walked in. The state officers did a great job reflecting on their year of service and what lies ahead of them. On Thursday morning I saw how state officers Tobin, Jarrod, Zac, Justin, Kati, Scotty, Tyler, Travis, Nick and Samantha kicked off convention with their first general session. Later that day, my good friend Casey gave his keynote speech to the entire convention. He gave me the chance to come up on stage with him and have some fun. The Texas members were having a great time listening to his speech and showing pride for their state. After the session, the moment we had all been waiting for came about. Cross Canadian Ragweed was in the house! Although I missed half the concert, I was able to listen to many of their good songs. The people at the concert were singing and raving all night. At the end of the concert, Casey met the security manager for the band, and he offered



to take us backstage to meet Cross Canadian Ragweed. Well, apparently that wasn't enough for him – he took Casey, Jarrod and I to their tour bus! The guys from the band chilled with us for a little bit, and talked to us about their experiences in FFA. Our "Cross Canadian Ragweed Night" was definitely a night to remember. Thursday morning another cool experience. During one of the sessions I met A.D. Pinson, last National NFA President in 1965, and Cal Brints, State



President for TX FFA on the same year. It was great to hear about their experiences and how FFA made a difference in their lives in such an important time in the history of our organization. During the day I had a chance to hang out with Ashley, Caitlin, Tony, Zach, Jennifer and Carlicia at the newsroom. The people at the newsroom were insane! I loved hanging out with them so much that I spent lots of hours at this room. Later that day Jennifer, Tony, Caitlin and I went out to dinner to Chili's downtown Fort Worth. We all had our very own cowboy/cowgirl hats and





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tight jeans. For the first time in my life I felt like a true cowboy! The FFA fun night was amazing. Members from all over the state performed on stage before more than five thousand people. Today, Friday, Casey and I joined the state officers for breakfast, and then headed to the session. After listening to Jarrod's retiring address, we had to leave as our plane was going to leave us behind.

I had a great time in good 'ol Texas and I can't wait to go back. Now I can see why Casey is always bragging about how everything is better and BIGGER in Texas. I'm on a plane as I write this journal entry, on my way to Washington, D.C., to meet with the rest of the team. The next few days will be spent on planning for the State Presidents' Conference. I can't wait to meet all the state officers that will be there!

Thursday, July 8, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Texas for State Convention

Friday afternoon, after a very long plane ride, Stacia and I finally made it from chilly upstate New York to blazing Phoenix, Arizona. Our arrival to Phoenix wasn't all that pleasant. Because of me being temporarily unable to walk, Stacia had to get the rental



car, come back and get her bags, my bags and the conference bags. I ought to tell you, she is quite the trooper! We left the airport and drove for about ten minutes. Before we knew it, we had arrived to our final destination – Tempe, Ariz.! The hotel was beautiful. There were palm trees and water fountains everywhere. We decided to spend the first few days getting ready for the conference and

setting up the room. By Sunday morning, we were ready to rock and roll. Around noon on Sunday we started seeing FFA jackets all over the hotel. The state officers were finally making their way to Arizona. During the opening session we met officers from Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Ohio, Nevada and Utah. It was so obvious that they were all very excited to be there. After the opening session, we all had a picnic at the grounds of the hotel, and later on got to watch the Fourth of July fireworks in downtown Tempe. The fireworks were amazing, and what a better way to spend our Fourth of July than with so many state officers?! That same night we learn the real meaning of "creating the magic" as FFA officers through reflections.





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Monday was full of learning as we explored the laws of teamwork. Later in the evening I had the opportunity to go out for dinner with Mr. Widner and all the New Mexico state officers. We had a great time eating at Ruby Tuesdays and drinking strawberry – kiwi lemonades! (Some of us had more strawberry than others). On Tuesday we learned a whole lot about chapter visits and their real meaning. We also learned the importance of making an impact and not just an impression. That night, Mr. Grandill and the rest of the state advisors

took us to Rustler's Roost – a very cool place about 25 minutes away from the hotel. First of all, they had a real cow by the door. Secondly, in order to get into the restaurant, you had to slide down a sled! Now, remember that I'm still on crutches... I had so much fun going down the sled, that I did it two more times! Thank you Colorado, New Mexico and Utah FFA for a great evening! Wednesday was spent learning about workshops and their importance. The state officers both developed and delivered their very own workshops. I was amazed at how brave the officers were to step up to the plate, and present to all their peers. Later in the evening we had a very fancy banquet with violin players and everything! Guest speaker, Dr. Knight from the Arizona State University did a phenomenal job talking about the role of a state officer. After the banquet everybody was "breaking it down" at the FFA dance. The people in the southwest do know how to dance!

This morning we had our closing session, which was both exciting and sad at the same time. Although it was time to move on, we didn't really want to leave. All the state officers at the 2004 Arizona NLCSO were just incredible. Their pride, love and passion for the FFA was evident at all times. Thank you officers for a great conference. It was an amazing way to finish up our NLCSO season.

I will be in Indianapolis, Ind., for the next few days, for the National FFA Board meeting.

Thursday, July 1, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Indianapolis, Ind., for the Board Meeting

Friday evening my partner in crime, Stacia, and I left Lincoln, Neb., to have another "wild" learning experience at New York's NLCSO. After some delays at the Chicago O'Hare airport, we finally made it to Syracuse, N.Y. by midnight! We rented a car and took what was supposed to be a two-hour drive – except we never made it to the camp that night! Stacia and I were totally lost in north central New York. We finally gave up around three o'clock in the morning and found a place to spend the night. Quite an interesting experience!





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Saturday morning we made it to Camp Oswegatchie where we met staff members Jen, Jennifer, Jamie, Kyle, Miranda, Eassa and old friend Victor. The camp staff took good care of us at the camp, and later took us out for dinner in downtown Croghan. Before and after eating supper they also helped us get ready for the conference at Getman



Lodge. On Sunday afternoon the Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York state officer teams made it to camp "O." That same night we opened the conference and had reflections. It was a great way to get started! Monday was full of learning as we discovered the laws of teamwork and leadership. Tuesday was a sort of a well-deserved break for everyone. We had high and low ropes all day! Not only did we have ropes, but we also got

a chance to go horseback riding, water skiing and swimming. Camp "O" is just amazing... they have everything you need to have fun in the outdoors! In the evening, my friends Lynn ("The Cowgirl") and Kim hooked me up and helped Victor and I get on horses.

Well, technically horses, but really, I was just riding a mule. Her name is Molly and she is a good mule. That night, after all the excitement, what a better way to end our day than to eat s'mores around a bonfire! On Wednesday we had more sessions in the morning and afternoon, but then in the evening, we had a banquet to celebrate the learning. The banquet committee did a "fantabulous" job! After the banquet we had the traditional FFA Dance at the Getman Lodge.



They played country, rock, salsa, and even some hip-hop. By the time Thursday rolled around, we were not ready to say good-bye – but we had to. After handshakes, hugs, and maybe even a few tears, Stacia and I drove down to Syracuse to get started on our next journey. Our time in New England was amazing and I know that we can't wait to go back. Thank you to all the New England state for a wonderful week in the woods.

This coming week we'll be presenting our last NLCSO conference in Tempe, Arizona. We can't wait to meet so many state officers from the southwest. Arizona... get ready because here we come!

June 24, 2004

Where I'll be next week: New York

Thursday evening after the Wisconsin State Convention was over, eight of the now past state officers took me to the Madison airport. Although my flight was delayed, I finally made it to Washington, D.C., by midnight. Kevin, assistant manager for WLC, picked me up at the airport and took me to my hotel. Friday morning I joined the group of almost 200





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members at the meeting room where we learned about character. That same morning I



got a wheelchair from the hotel and headed to Arlington Cemetery with all the members. Thank you Brigham, Ashley, Emma, Scott and Anthony for pushing me around. When Scott was acting as my designated driver, he pushed me down a hill as fast as he could – it was like a roller coaster! Although I feared for my life, we had tons of fun together. Later in the afternoon I ate

lunch with some old friends from Kansas FFA (they were everywhere!) while Jeremy from Ohio entertained us singing some good old country music on stage. That same night we took a night tour of Washington, D.C. I was fortunate to have John pushing my wheelchair around all night long. Thanks John! Saturday morning we had our service adventure and we went to a field in Maryland to harvest vegetables for the needy people in the D.C. area. The WLC participants collected hundreds and hundreds of bags for the food bank. A few of us were temporarily incapacitated so Jennifer, Rachel and I just got to watch! On our way back from the farm I had a chance to sit down next to a very cool girl from Kansas named Megan. That night we had our final celebration and I was given the opportunity to speak to all the participants. After my speech we had our traditional FFA dance – it was awesome! I got to see many old friends like Matt, Frank and Steve from Maine and make some new ones like Matt Burns from Kansas. Whether it was hanging out with Anthony, Tyler and Mike; dancing with Rachel, or talking to Heidi, Cassie, Ashley and Derrick I had a blast! The WLC participants for week # 3 rocked my world. Thank you guys and girls and go Radios!

After sleeping in and almost missing my flight, I finally made it to Lincoln, Nebraska for NLCSO. I arrived into Lincoln at 10:30 in the morning, and Stacia was supposed to get in at noon. At about 11:30 a.m. she called me and told me that she was still in Wyoming! Her flight had been cancelled and she wasn't going to make it to Nebraska until 5:30 in



the evening. Thank God there was so much to do in Lincoln! Stacia finally arrived and after driving for about an hour, we made it to The Leadership Center in Aurora Nebraska. Tuesday morning we met the state officer teams from Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota,

Missouri and Kansas. They were all so passionate and dedicated to the FFA! Tuesday night we had our opening session and the next few days were full of excitement as we explored different areas of leadership. On Thursday night Stacia and I had a chance to judge their talent show, which they call "The Bone Talent Show." They actually give a



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bone to the team that wins the contest! Stacia played a great Paula and I was just the meanest Simon ever. Congratulations Minnesota on a win well deserved. Tomorrow, Friday we'll be flying to the state of New York to present NLCSO to all the New England states. We just can't wait to meet everyone up there!

June 17, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Aurora, Nebraska

I had never been to Wisconsin before, but I'm definitely determined to go back. The people there are just special... On Sunday afternoon, Crystal, a past state officer, picked me up at the airport and took me out for lunch.

Once we arrived to the hotel, I met 11 dedicated individuals who were very excited about state convention. Chris, Jackie, Angie, Jamie, Kayla, Christine, Keith, Nicole, Steve, Kim and Kevin are all part of the 2003-2004 Wisconsin FFA State Officer Team. It was enjoyable to watch them practice their sessions and ceremonies. They just seemed to have a hard time focusing! Mrs. Zimmerman, WI's executive director knew how to keep them on track though. On Monday afternoon Jamie and



Angie took me out for lunch and then took me to the location of my first workshop. About 45 FFA members showed up at this workshop. We had a great time just getting to know each other. Later that evening we were all encouraged to think about the legacy that has been left for us in the FFA at the state officer's reflections. Tuesday morning I ate breakfast with three very interesting members, Kevin, Kevin and Kevin! For some reason they were always together. Thank you guys for helping me carry my food! After breakfast I presented another workshop to about 110 students – my friend Mike (Banana Boy) was a great helper. I then ate lunch with Katie, Jessica, Chelsea, Ryan, Sarah, Erin and Whitney from Random Lake FFA. I was asked to address all the participants at the second general session "Celebrating Diversity." At the next session I had a pretty cool experience – I got to hang out with the 2004-2005 Spirit Stick Champions, Augusta FFA! The Augusta members were so pumped! Scott and his friends had glow sticks, noisemakers, clapping thingies; in fact they had a fiesta! That night I had a chance to show my dancing skills at the traditional FFA dance. Some of the male students had some interesting costumes on just for the dance. Wednesday morning my friend Brian helped me with breakfast at the hotel, and we then headed to the Life Work Expo at convention. The Life Work Expo was amazing. They had businesses, chapters, universities, games, and even a stage for the FFA talent. I had a good time meeting members and eating lunch. Later that same day I was asked to speak at the Leadership Dinner where we learned about serving and believing in others. I also had a chance to meet Dr. Sourhammer, Miss Wisconsin! Wednesday night at the 6th general session the 2004-2005 Wisconsin FFA Officer Team-Elect was announced. For many it was the beginning of a dream come true, and for others it was a time to make some tough



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decisions. This session was full of emotions as many awards were presented. Once the session was over I had a chance to make a fool of myself when the great hypnotist Jim Wand hypnotized me. I'm not sure about everything I did or said while on stage, but I'm sure the people there had a great time watching! Thursday morning the new State President, Nicole Schmidt, was announced. After convention I spent some time with the past state officer team and their family as we



as with the new state officer team and their advisors. The 75th Annual Wisconsin FFA Convention was just unbelievable. I loved the people, the weather, the food, and the facilities. The members from Montello were cool, the ones from Augusta were passionate, the ones from Tri County showed respect, the kids from Independence were just funny, and the ones from Random Lake, well, they were just random! I had a great time in Wisconsin and I just can't wait to go back. Thank you Wisconsin FFA for an amazing week!

Thursday, June 6, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Madison, WI and Washington, D.C. for WLC

After a couple delays due to bad weather, I finally made it to State College, Pennsylvania, on Saturday at 11:00 p.m.! Dr. Kerry Richards, a professor at Penn State and Executive Director for the PA FFA Foundation picked me up at the small airport. On Sunday afternoon, one of my best friends, David Bittner drove for two hours to meet me in State College. We enjoyed a good dinner at Eat n' Park and then caught up with each other's lives at the hotel. It was so good to be back to Penn State! Monday evening Mr. Brammer, PA's Executive Secretary, took us out for dinner. We met him and the state officer team at a very cool German restaurant in Bellefonte, PA. We ate lots of sausage, cabbage and pickles! I will confess, the food was good, but I don't see myself eating cabbage for the rest of my life. I think I'll stick to my Puerto Rican rice and beans! Eric R., Amber, Heather, Eric, Bernie, Laura, Jason Brian, Melissa, Amy and Becky, the PA state officer team, helped me get ready for the next few days. They were so pumped about state convention! Sherisa and Valerie also joined us for dinner. Tuesday morning I was able to meet a lot of members and advisors as they registered for the 75th PA FFA State Convention. Later that day I had the opportunity to meet Keith, the nominating committee chair and the rest of his committee. They were about to get started with their interview process, but before they got started I made sure I told them to be nice! After meeting the committee, I met the state officer candidates. They were a little bit nervous but ready to amaze the nominating committee. At the evening session I





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was given the chance to address everyone at convention. We learned about the importance of giving to others without expecting anything in return.

Wednesday morning we helped out with the delegate business session. I met a lot of cool delegates, but Tiffany and Fatima stand out in my mind. They were both chairs of their respective committees and the surely knew how to have a good time "W B Saul style." The delegates made some important decisions that will guarantee the success of PA FFA for years to come. I had the afternoon "off," so I decided to visit some faculty and advisors at Penn State. I even got to eat some Penn State ice cream at the university creamery! That night we had another general session. This was not just any session though. I got my picture taken with the Pennsylvania Dairy Princesses! Also, during this session I was adopted by the Big Spring FFA chapter - Britney and her friends were so much fun! Thursday morning, at the final general session, we heard how the 2004-2005 state officer team was



announced. After convention was over I spent a little bit of time with the new state officers. They were challenged to live "above the line" at all times, and to lead PA's 8,000 members through service. It looks like Mr. Brammer is going to be busy with 10 amazing individuals.

Miss Oberst, my chapter advisor at Northern Lebanon FFA, and the rest of my chapter members picked me up at the hotel and took me back to Lebanon County to visit my host family. Michelle and Jenny kept me busy with their funny ideas. Alex, Kelly and John didn't say a whole lot during the whole trip while Jake, Pat and Mark slept almost the whole time! I spent the next two days at my host family's house resting and getting up to date.

Thank you PA FFA for a great time. As you know, I'm proud to call Pennsylvania my second home! I can't wait to come back and see everyone again.

June 4, 2004

After the Puerto Rico State Convention was over, I had the opportunity to go up to Utuado, a small town in the mountains of the island. Amanda, Rudy, Amneris, Adianez, Warys and I stayed at Mr. Jimenez's house. Mr. Jimenez is the past Executive Secretary for the Association and a current agriculture teacher. We had a great time touring the island, going to the movie theater, and tasting the delightful Puerto Rican food.





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Leaving P.R. was hard, but I still knew that I was going to be fine because I was headed to Kansas! Monday morning I flew to the Kansas City Airport and took a shuttle from the airport to the Little Apple – Manhattan, Kan. On Tuesday I attended the State Officer Candidate Luncheon where I met 11 amazing individuals who were hoping to be elected to serve the FFA as officers. I also had a chance to meet six outstanding individuals: Justine, Emily, Lucas, Clint Blaes, Melissa, and Clint Bryant – Kansas 2003-2004 State Officer team. That night I was blessed to hang out with Michael, Matt, and Keith – all past state officers. Wednesday afternoon I presented a workshop to about 175 Kansas FFA members. We had a great time learning about service and character. That night the state officers kicked off the convention with awesome reflections entitled “The Case of the Lost Legacy.” The reflections even had a talking cow... they were so good! After reflections, two of Nebraska’s past state officers Beau and Becky took me over to the Manhattan Town Center for the FFA dance. The dance took place at the mall! There were FFA members dancing everywhere. Of course I had to do my one legged dance before I went to bed.



On Thursday I had lunch with all the Proficiency Award winners and later that evening I had the opportunity to hang out with an amazing chapter – Winesfield FFA and their advisor Mr. Epler. They took me out to Rusty’s Last Chance, a very cool sports restaurant in Aggieville. Alex, Dustin, Kyle and the rest of the crew showed me how to have fun “Kansas style.” On Friday morning I had the opportunity to address all the convention attendants and after the session was over I spent some time with Cherryvale FFA. Man they are fun! Mrs.

Allen and Mrs. Fox took me out to Dairy Queen along with Ben, Brian, Brandon, Sawn, and some other cool chapter members.

At the last general session I saw how the new State Officer team was elected. Dan, Sarah, John, Jarrod, Leah, and Blair have the important task of leading the Kansas FFA Association this coming year. I can already tell that Kansas will remain strong for many years to come. On Saturday I’ll be flying to State College, Pennsylvania... my home away from home! I can’t wait to see so many friends at the PA State Convention.

May 27, 2004

Where I’ll be next week: Kansas

The flight from Houston was just long. So long that they served beverages three times! I’ve been on this flight before though, so it wasn’t a big surprise. Once I heard the flight attendant speaking both in English and Spanish, I knew I was on my way to the Island of the Enchantment – Puerto Rico! My good friend, Andrés, picked me up at the airport. We had a good time catching up with everything that has happened since I last saw him. The next day, my good friend and state president Warys, picked me up and took me to the Embassy Suites Hotel in San Juan, where the convention was to take place. At the



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hotel, I met with the executive secretary, Wendy, and with the rest of the state officers, Jeffrey, Pollito, Angelic, Angei, Karlai, and Idalys. They have so much fun together! Hanging out with the state officers brought back so many memories from my state officer year. Thursday night I promised Warys that I would help him out with some stuff for convention and we ended up staying up until five o'clock in the morning! Needless to say, on Friday I was sleepy all day long. Friday night mom and dad picked me up and took me to my grandma's 88th birthday. About 70 people were at her house – we had such a good time. I know she was happy to have everyone there. I truly enjoyed seeing so many relatives and family members.

On Saturday afternoon, members from all over the island started arriving to the hotel for registration. There were many familiar faces everywhere. In the evening, the state officers kicked off the convention with an opening session that was more like a "fiesta." It was very obvious that the members were very pumped to be there. Saturday morning the CDEs took place while I had the opportunity to present a leadership workshop to about 70 members, parents, and advisors. In the evening we had our "cena de gala" which is nothing but a formal dinner for all the convention attendants. At this dinner I was given the opportunity to address my fellow members. It was such a blessing to be able to speak at my home convention. Once the session was over, we had the traditional FFA dance until 1:30 in the morning. At the last general session I witnessed how seven individuals became the 2004-2005 Puerto Rico State FFA Officers. Neidy, Jose, Amilcar, Angelica, Alvin, Adriana, and Daniel have the task to keep Puerto Rico FFA strong in the next year. I'm convinced that they will do a great job as state officers.

Amanda Cloud, past Montana State President, and Rudy Espinoza, past Florida State Vice President came down for convention. Now that convention is over we are staying at Andy's house. Andy is an amazing agriculture teacher and FFA advisor who lives in the mountains of Puerto Rico. We are also hanging out with past state officers Warys, Adianez, Amneris, and Jonathan. Thank you Puerto Rico FFA for welcoming me back home with opened arms and hearts. I must say that: *"Estoy muy orgulloso de ser puertrriqueño."* After having the opportunity to hang out at the Puerto Rico state convention I must say that there is no place like home!

This weekend I'll be staying at my home in Culebra with my family. I think mom and dad will be glad to have me around for a few days. On Tuesday I get to travel to the great state of Kansas for state convention. I can't wait to hang out with some very cool people.

**Where I'll be next week: College Station, Texas and San Juan, Puerto Rico
May 14, 2004**

The 2004 Maine FFA state convention was a blast! There were members from all over the state – everywhere from Presque Isle down to the Bangor area. Thursday morning we had the convention kick off at the University of Maine in Bangor. The atmosphere in the auditorium was perfect – there was blue and gold everywhere! I had a chance to see many CDEs take place as well as some





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workshops presented by past state officers. Later in the afternoon, Jeff, the state president chaired the business session with the official delegates. Both Jeff and Micaela gave their retiring addresses at this session. There is one thing I learned at this convention – Maine FFA members love their state officers! You should have seen the standing ovation the officers got from advisors and their fellow members. In the evening we all had a great time dancing to the rhythm of a live band! They knew how to play all types of music. Believe it or not, with my crutches, I did the one legged dance! Friday morning I saw how many FFA members were honored at the Awards banquet. At the end of the banquet, the new state officers took over. I can already tell that Maine is going to have an amazing year with such leadership. On Sunday morning, Mr. Tom Hale, the Caribou FFA advisor and Maine's FFA Advisor of the Year, picked me up at my hotel and took me to church with his family. I had such a great time spending time in fellowship with such a great family. I had an awesome time in Maine and I can't wait to go back. Thank you Maine FFA for showing how to have a good time. You are all 'wicked' cool!

Sunday afternoon I left Bangor, Maine and flew to College Station, Texas, to reunite with my teammates. During the next few days, we'll be getting ready for the National Leadership Conference for State Officers. Once I'm done in Texas I'll be going back to Puerto Rico for state convention. I can't wait to see everyone back home! Puerto Rico FFA: *"¡Prepárense porque ya voy de camino!"*



May 6, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Bangor, Maine and Texas



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After eight hours of traveling and three different plane rides I finally made it to Presque Isle, Maine. Jeff, Maine's state president, picked me up at the tiny airport and took me to his house. We ate some good ol' baked potatoes and steak for dinner. On Monday



morning, Mrs. Perry, the Ashland FFA advisor, picked me up at the hotel. I spent the whole morning presenting workshops and learning about Ashland. Ms. Sutherland, one of Presque Isle's advisors, gave me a ride from Ashland to the Presque Isle High School. After visiting the school I had a chance to hang out with chapter officers, Heidi F., Sam, Amanda and Heidi L. They wanted me to experience Maine to the fullest and so they took me to another country. Don't ask me how but we ended up

in Canada! We went out for dinner at a Canada restaurant called Checkers Pizza. It was my first time in Canada and I was happy to share it with some FFA friends. Tuesday morning Mr. Molton and Mr. McCrum, Washburn's FFA advisors, picked me up at the hotel and took me to their FFA chapter. I had a chance to talk to their school assembly and share with them a little bit of what we do in our organization. Blake, Seth, Heidi, Margo, Amber, Stephanie, Shawn and Allen-Michael



showed me how to have a good time. After saying goodbye to my friends at Washburn FFA, I made my way to a very cool chapter – Caribou FFA. Mr. Hale the chapter advisor and Tim, chapter president, gave me a quick tour of their facilities and introduced me to some of the students. At their chapter meeting I met Mike, Mark, John, Cole, Ryan and Tasha. I also had a chance to see how new officers Darick, Frank, Nick, Katie, Sarah, Matt and others took over. After the meeting we were

given a great surprise. Waiting for us at the back of the school were two white limousines! I went out for dinner with the past and new chapter officers to an Italian restaurant. After eating dinner we decided to go looking for moose all over the county. I never thought I would go moose "hunting" in a limo! Unfortunately, we didn't get to see any! On Wednesday morning Mr. Putnam picked me up at the hotel and took me to his chapter, Mars Hill FFA. I spent the day



presenting workshops about service to five different classes! Stuart, Brandon, Felicia, Megan and Ericah made me feel very welcome. Later that day, Mr. Marquis picked me up with some members of the Easton FFA chapter and took me down to Bangor for state



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convention. We ate dinner at a Chinese restaurant and had a lot of fun “Maine style.” Jarred and Nick talked to me about movies while Justin, Brandon, Seth, Tessa and George showed their excitement about state convention. Easton FFA is a very cool chapter and I am glad I had a chance to hang out with them. Tomorrow morning we start with the convention kick off. I can’t wait to meet so many FFA members from all over the state!

April 29, 2004

Where I’ll be next week: Maine

I’ve never been able to tell where someone’s from just by the way they talk. This time it was a little bit different. As soon as I got off the plane, I knew that I was in Georgia. Man, I love that southern accent! Tiffany Sanderson picked me up at the Atlanta airport – about three hours late! Her plane was delayed, so I guess it wasn’t her fault. We drove for about two hours and finally arrived in Athens at midnight. The FFA state convention started on Thursday night at the Classic Center. Everyone was so pumped about being there – it was such a great feeling! On Friday night I had a chance to address all the participants. I tried to speak with a southern accent but it didn’t really work out for me. I sounded more like a “Southerican” than anything else. Later that night, Stacia and I went to the FFA dance – those Georgians do know how to dance! We also had a great time at the career show and at all the sessions. State Officers Cliffy, Hope, Cathy, Dathan, Ashley, Shelby, Michael and Rodney did an outstanding job. Way to go guys! I was amazed by the powerful spirit everyone had at the last session when the final slate for the 2004-2005 state officers was announced. It looks like Georgia FFA is going to remain strong for years to come.

This week I’ve been spending a couple days down in Florida going to the doctor and resting. I’m very excited about my visit to Maine on Sunday.

April 24, 2004

Where I’ll be next week: Athens, Georgia

The flight wasn’t too bad, a little bit longer than I would have liked. I didn’t mind it though because after all, this was going to be my first time in California. State Officers Nicolina, Colette, Erica and Lindsay picked me up at the Fresno Airport and took me to dinner and to the hotel. At dinner I had a chance to meet their teammates, Megan and Tommy. Saturday morning I was able to see the parliamentary procedure finals where members from Arbuckle, Bear River and Esparto and others did a fantastic job. In the evening I had the opportunity to kick off the first general session with a keynote message. The California members were so welcoming! On Sunday I went to Fresno State and gave two workshops to about 100 members. Monday was a special day because many members were able to attend convention for a one-day program. That’s when I had a chance to present a workshop completely in Spanish! At the last general session, I had the honor of seeing the dream of six young people come true. The 2004-2005 California state officer team was installed by the past officer team. The state officers did a fantastic job at the 2004 California State Leadership Conference. Their general sessions and retiring addresses were spectacular. Once the conference was over, Galt FFA took me to Sacramento County. Tuesday night I was able to hang out with newly elected state



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treasurer's family, the Robertsons – thank you! For these and many other reasons, I am determined to return to the Golden State. Way to go California! This coming week I'll have a chance to hang out with the Georgia FFA members. I look forward to seeing many friends and making some new ones.

April 15, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Fresno, California

"What you have right now means little compared to what you leave behind. Have you made a difference?"

- Joshua Brandsma

I spent the last few days with my teammates working on NLCSO curriculum. Easter was a lot of fun at the Sanderson's house in Indianapolis. Monday and Tuesday were great because our entire team modeled for the FFA Blue Catalog. Wait until you see the catalog! I have always enjoyed traveling, but this time it's special. I get to go to the Golden State, California, for the first time ever! While in California, I get to present a workshop completely in Spanish – isn't that awesome? I'll have to keep you updated on the happenings at the California State Leadership Conference. Next Wednesday I get a chance to go back to the great state of Georgia for their state convention. I'm looking forward to some good old sweet tea and to seeing so many friends from the south.

Where I'll be next week: Indianapolis, Indiana

April 5, 2004

This week has been full of excitement as I get back on the road with FFA. Last Thursday I had an opportunity to speak at the Northern Lebanon FFA Chapter Banquet in Fredericksburg, Pennsylvania. Chapter Officers, Jenny, Michelle, Helena, Meritt, Matt and Jon did such a great job. It was great to see so many FFA members being recognized. The Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture, Dennis Wolff, and some of the Pennsylvania State Officers were there as well. I was very impressed with the quality of the banquet and the work the members put into it. On Friday I was invited to an area event where I had chance to judge the Creed Speaking CDE. The contestants did a great job. Other events taking place were Public Speaking and Parliamentary Procedures. After the event I went back to Northern Lebanon High School where I had a chance to see their baby emus! I have been having a great time in Pennsylvania but it's time to take off. This week I'll be in Indiana working with my fellow teammates on the National Leadership Conference for State Officers.

April 1, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Pennsylvania

The greatest thing in the world is not so much where we are, but in what direction we are moving.

- Oliver Wendell Holmes



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Last Thursday I took a huge step on the road to recovery. I took my first flight since the car accident last January. I spent five days at the 2004 Spring Training Academy for WLC, BLAST-Off, and NLCSO trainers in Indianapolis. It was very exciting to see the passion these individuals have for FFA and our members. I am confident that all these conferences are going to be amazing because of all the time and effort that's being devoted to them. It's comforting to know that many fellow FFA members will have quality trainers at these conferences. On Tuesday I had a chance to visit the National FFA Center and see so many good friends that work there. I wish I could have spent more time with them, but before I knew it was time to fly back to Pennsylvania. I will be staying at my host family's house until I get back on the road with FFA on April 7th.

March 8, 2004

"When I find myself fading, I close my eyes and realize my friends are my energy."

-[Anon.](#)

What an amazing week I've had! It feels good to be back in the game. Although I'm still recovering from my accident, this week I've been able to return to my duties as an officer. My doctor doesn't want me to fly yet, but at least I'm getting some work done with my fellow teammates!

Last Friday, Tiffany Sanderson (the national officer coordinator) and Amy picked me up at my host family's place and took me to the famous Strawberry Patch Bed and Breakfast in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania. What a place! You see, I like strawberries a lot, but this is a little bit too much. There are fake strawberries on the walls, on the ceiling, and on the tables. We eat strawberries for breakfast and dessert. There are strawberries everywhere! In spite of that, it is a nice place to stay. So if you are a strawberry lover, now you know where to go!

By Saturday night everyone was here. It was so great to have the entire team together once again. I heard lots of stories about their business and industry tours and National FFA Week. This week we have been able to work on convention speeches and workshops. We have also had discussions about the State President's Conference (SPC) and the National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSO). Our team is pumped about these conferences. We are having a lot of fun putting them together.

On Wednesday, I had a special opportunity to take my teammates to my adoptive home chapter in the states, Northern Lebanon FFA in Fredericksburg, Penn. How exciting to see everyone again! Miss Oberst and the members gave us a great welcome to the chapter. Christy and Anne presented a workshop to a group of sophomores and Amy and Casey presented to a group of freshmen. The students behaved so well! I was very proud of my second home chapter. Jenny, Michelle, Meredith and Matt, all chapter officers, were not supposed to be there, but they all came down to hang out with us. We had a great time at Northern Lebanon. My teammates are leaving on Sunday but I think I'm going to have a chance to see them again in two weeks. Having them here in Pennsylvania with me has been great for me. Now, more than ever, I'm anxious to fully return to my duties as an officer. That's the power of friendship and I feel blessed to be part of this team.

February 13, 2004



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"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you." --Isaiah 43:2

On Saturday, January 17 I flew to my host family's house in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. It was very exciting to see them after almost two months. In my last journal entry I told you that I would let you know how my trip to Penn State went. Well, things didn't turn out exactly the way I had planned. On Monday, January 19, I took a two-hour drive from my host family's house to The Pennsylvania State University. I arrived at Penn State around noon and as I was driving around I saw my good friend Elio Chiarelli waiting for the bus at the bus stop. I stopped and offered to take him back to his apartment. Elio didn't think about it twice as it was freezing cold outside. I spent about half an hour hanging out at Elio's place and then drove back to the university. I visited some of my professors and advisors, Dr. Bowen, Dr. Wade, Dr. Lyons and Dr. Fivek. I also had a chance to visit some good friends at my old dormitory, the Earth House. I had a good time visiting my old roommate Jon and some other friends from the house, Lindsay, Karen and David. Around 6:30 pm my friends and I headed to the PSU Collegiate FFA meeting. I had a chance to eat a home cooked meal prepared by our Collegiate FFA advisor, Tiffany Hoy. Right after supper I decided to head home, since I knew the roads weren't in great conditions because it had just snowed the day before.

I remember leaving Penn State around 7:30 p.m. and waking up in the hospital two days later! I wasn't exactly sure what I was doing at the hospital, until everything started to make sense. I finally figured out that I had been in a serious car accident the night of the 19. Apparently nobody could find me after I had the accident, and it wasn't until eight hours later that a Pennsylvania Department of Transportation employee found me in the cold. A helicopter then took me to Geisinger Hospital in Danville, Penn., where the doctors were expecting me to have hypothermia. Miraculously, as soon as I arrived to the hospital they noticed that even though my body was very cold, it was at a normal temperature. Evidently someone was watching out for me! I still don't know what happened the night of the accident, but I do thank God for keeping me alive and for giving me strength and courage to go on. It is good to know that when I pass through the waters, rivers and even fire, He is with me.

My mom and dad came from Puerto Rico as soon as they heard about the accident. It was really nice to have them close to me in the midst of all the chaos. My host family from Pennsylvania also took good care of me. They were the first ones to find out about the accident and they stood by my side at all times. I have been feeling much better since the doctors sent me home. I am staying at my host family's house in Lebanon, Pennsylvania. Although I love being at their house, I can't wait to recover so that I can get back on the road with FFA!

I have also been blessed with a wonderful family, friends, and fellow FFA members who have shown how much they care about me. The massive amount of cards, e-mails and letters of support I have received throughout the past three weeks have amazed me. Thank you to all the associations, chapters, and FFA members that have shown that they care one way or another. I have enjoyed reading every single card, letter and e-mail that I have received. Also, thank you for keeping me in your thoughts and prayers. I have



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seen how God is answering those prayers and that is great prove of His love. I have faith that I will be back on my feet before I know it!

Last Friday my fellow teammates came to visit me in Pennsylvania. They arrived from their trip to Japan, rented a car, and drove 3-hours from Washington, D.C., just to see me! Isn't that sweet? It was so exciting to have the entire national officer team together after so long. I can't explain how much it meant to me that they came all the way from D.C. after having just spent 12 or 13 hours in a plane. Since their visit I have been feeling much better. I am hoping to be able to attend ACES, a leadership conference that the Pennsylvania FFA Association holds every year. We'll see how I'm feeling this weekend.

Where I'll be next week: Washington D.C.
January 15, 2004

"We should not only use all the brains we have, but all that we can borrow."
- Woodrow Wilson

Last Friday my teammates and I took a flight from a very small airport in Macon, Georgia, to the state's capital, Atlanta. The flight lasted 18 minutes... I had never been in such a short flight before! From Atlanta we took a longer flight to Indianapolis. Saturday was a great day for reflection, relaxation, and lots of sleeping! We had such a great time in Georgia, that I was absolutely exhausted. Saturday noon we had the opportunity to eat lunch at a great Italian restaurant with David and Dan, two national officers of the Business Professionals of America (BPA). It was interesting to see what they had to say about their organization. I learned a lot about their mission and some of the things that they are trying to accomplish as a student organization. On Sunday most of my teammates and I had a chance to go to church together. I really enjoyed taking time for myself and for spiritual growth after such a busy week.

The rest of the week was great for me because I was able to work on some speeches and workshops. Our team had some training sessions with Tiffany Sanderson, our coordinator, and Andy Armbruster, a National FFA staff member and past national officer. We also had a chance to talk about and plan some of the FFA conferences that are coming up. It was exciting to hear so many fresh ideas from my teammates. Although I have always known the importance of teamwork, this week I really had an opportunity to understand that two brains can think better than one. Just think about what six brains can do together!

This coming Saturday I will be traveling to Pennsylvania where I'm planning on visiting my host family, the Lovetts. I am also planning on visiting some friends up at Penn State. I'll have to let you know how things go!

Where I'll be next week: Indianapolis
January 8, 2004

¡Qué bien yo pasé las navidades! (I'll let you translate that one!)

I can't even begin to tell you how exciting it was to be able to spend Christmas in Puerto Rico with my family. I hadn't been home since last June, so mom, dad, and my siblings were all very happy to see me... and if not, they faked it well. I arrived to San Juan, the capital, on Monday the 21st. After picking up my luggage at the baggage claim area, I



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realized that there was no one there to pick me up! After some time my friend Andrés showed up to pick me up. I immediately asked him about my family and their whereabouts. He told me to relax and to just “roll along.” He finally took me to a room at the airport, and when he opened the door, there were more than 30 people waiting for me! It was really excited to see my family, friends and advisors at this welcome party. We ate, sang, laughed, and had a great time. Thank you for such a great welcome. We also had other activities around the island to celebrate Puerto Rico's involvement in the organization. Christmas day was excellent. I had a chance to eat a lot of rice, beans, roasted pork and some other typical foods. Although I thought I was going to have a chance to go to the beach (it was about 85 degrees), it didn't happen. I guess I'll just have to wait till next time.

I came back to Indianapolis on New Year's Eve. I spent the week with my fellow teammates getting ready for our Training Experience in Georgia. Last Monday I woke up at 3:30a.m. to take a flight with my team to Albany, Georgia, where Mr. Wilkinson, the state Executive Secretary, and Mr. Lastly, Activity Coordinator picked us up. We drove from the airport to Monroe High School where the students and the faculty were just phenomenal. There I met many FFA members including Erika and William. It was great to see what these students are doing to keep agricultural education strong.

After our great reception at Monroe High School, we were able to drive to Tipton, Ga., where we presented some workshops at the South Region Greenhand Night. I had a great time as I mingled with many FFA members including Shawn, Garret (Curious George?), Cristen, Michael, Anna, Jessica, Matt, and Ben. They were all very interesting, and ready to have a good time. I also had the opportunity to meet Shelby and Ashley, two of Georgia's state officers. On Tuesday morning our team traveled to the Irwin County High School. There I had the opportunity to hang out with Andrew, Drew and Tyler. We also made a stop at the Jeff Davis Middle School in Hazlehurst, Ga., where Mrs. McLeod and her class gave us a great welcome. My good friend Casey presented a workshop at this school. My friend Jamie gave us a great welcome to the school. Thank you for doing that! That evening the entire team had a wonderful relaxed meal with the Georgia state staff, two state officers (Cliff and Cathy), and a past state officer named Rachel.

On Wednesday, I woke up at 5:30 a.m., to take a long van ride to Franklin County High School in Carnesville, Georgia. This school was amazing! The school has about 800 hundred students, and 500 hundred of them are FFA members! Will, Matt and Dave showed me what a good time they all have in Franklin County. Later in the day we drove to Stephens County Middle School in Eastanollee, where the students really know how to behave. Eric, Chris and some of the other members took our team out to lunch, and afterward we spent some time with about 400 students at their gym. I was able to present a workshop to about 30 students who were just excellent. Right after my workshop we had to drive for a long time until we finally arrived to the Georgia FFA Center. We had a lot of fun with all the chapter officers and other members from the great state of Georgia. Casey and I presented a workshop for about 35 fellow members. It was really exciting to be able to spend some time with such great people. On Friday our team is going to have the opportunity to meet with many agricultural education teachers from the state. We will be departing Georgia sometime Friday afternoon. I'll never forget the great times I had in this great state. Thank you Georgia for such a wonderful experience!



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Where I will be next week: Puerto Rico
December 22, 2003

"To dream anything that you want to dream. That is the beauty of the human mind... To trust yourself to test your limits. That is the courage to succeed."

- Bernard Edmonds

Over the past couple weeks I have been able to see my life change in ways that I never imagined...

It's been awhile since the 2003 National Convention but the excitement hasn't diminished. I still remember sitting at the 10th general session. There was a lot of tension in the arena. I knew that a decision had been made and that soon I would hear God's voice loud and clear. Whether I was going to become a national officer or not, I was anxious to hear what I was going to be doing this year. As soon as I heard: "El presidente nacional from Puerto Rico..." I felt like my head was going to explode with thrill and excitement. I couldn't help but thank God for an amazing opportunity.

About two weeks after convention I had a chance to travel to the great state of Illinois. I had a great time at the National Farm-City Council's Annual Luncheon in Chicago. At the luncheon I was blessed to meet some FFA members from Illinois, as well as the state officers. Ryan, Brian, Rachel, Kenan and Bruce, gave me a quick tour of the city and we finally made it to the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences. The students at this High School were amazing. They made me feel extremely welcome.

On December 1 my teammates and I arrived to the National FFA Center. Since then we have been going through intense and exciting training. It will be fun to put everything I have learned into practice. The past three weeks have also been vital for team building. We have grown not only as individuals but also as a team. Getting to know my teammates better, and spending time with them has been very exciting. The second week after arriving to Indianapolis I had the opportunity to take the entire team to my friend Eric's house. We cooked an authentic Puerto Rican meal that made me miss home. My teammates seemed to enjoy my Puerto Rican food very much.

I will be spending Christmas with my family down in Puerto Rico. I haven't seen them since the end of June so I am really excited. A Puerto Rican Christmas is always fun! Finally, I feel blessed and honored to be able to serve as a national officer. I know this year is going to be challenging, but I also know that it's going to be a great opportunity for growth and service. I am looking forward to growing and learning while serving the FFA and my fellow members.