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New Look! With this issue, *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* is sporting a new design. The staff hopes this new design, featuring full-color capabilities, will provide greater usability for readers.

Life Lessons in Louisville

the 2003 National FFA Convention will be overflowing with fun and excitement. Beyond the pomp and circumstance, however, the convention's underlying purpose is educating young people and celebrating their accomplishments.



Leading the Learning

At the very heart of the convention, you'll find a treasure chest of life lessons just waiting to be discovered and applied in you and your students' daily lives. Self-understanding, goalsetting, personal motivation and many other latent lessons are there for the learning, if we will but take the time and effort to seek them out. Frequently, the lessons are internalized not in the high-energy moments of the convention, but in the quiet, reflective moments when dreams are shared and goals established. The advisor's role in creating these moments of reflection is paramount.

Author Eric Hoffer reminds us of the importance of life-long learning, writing, "In times of drastic change, it is the **learners** who inherit the future. The **learned** will find themselves equipped for a world that no longer exists."

The national FFA convention is designed not only to stimulate student learning, but also to motivate teachers and provide professional development opportunities. Those of us who are charged with teaching the next generation owe it to ourselves and our students to grasp the opportunities offered at the convention and absorb the lessons presented.

Planning for Success

This year's convention schedule offers a robust mix of teacher workshops and other opportunities. Maximizing your convention experience, as well as the experiences of your students, will require forethought and planning.

This issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference* focuses on the 2003 National FFA Convention and provides information to assist teachers in planning a positive, educational experience for all. Because the convention encompasses so many different events, workshops, sessions and shows, creating a plan to follow is critical.

“In times of drastic change, it is the **learners** who inherit the future. The **learned** will find themselves equipped for a world that no longer exists.”

Beyond the information presented in this issue of *FFA Advisors Making a Difference*, you'll find more details in the *Convention Planning Guide*, which was mailed to all chapters earlier this fall, and is available online at www.ffa.org. Don't set this aside for later. Many tours and events require advance reservations or ticket purchases. Start assembling your plan for a great convention now!



JOHN DEERE CREDIT: PROUD TO SUPPORT FFA

John Deere Credit salutes FFA and its chapter advisors around the country for their strong dedication to developing tomorrow's agricultural leaders. Through events and sponsorships such as the JDC™ Classic 4020 Tractor Giveaway, now in its tenth year, John Deere Credit continues its long-standing commitment to helping FFA develop the skills of young people just getting started. So, from all of us at John Deere Credit to FFA advisors and everyone else who helps keep the dream alive, "Thanks."



Valerie Vaughn
Penn Yan FFA Chapter
Penn Yan Academy,
New York

Proud winner of the
2002 John Deere Credit
Classic 4020 Tractor
Giveaway



ATTENTION!

Be sure to remove the enclosed John Deere Credit Classic 4020 Tractor Giveaway insert from this newsletter. The backside features all the details of this year's giveaway, and an entry form template you can use to photocopy entry forms for all your students. You can then display the front of the poster in your classroom or meeting area. NOTE: You will not receive anything in the mail regarding this year's giveaway.



John Deere Credit
is proud to
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JOHN DEERE
CREDIT

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 National FFA Organization is a resource and support organization that does not select, control or supervise state association, local chapter or individual member activities except as expressly provided for in the National FFA Organization Constitution and Bylaws.

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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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[\[www.ffa.org/news/html/ffapubsindex.html\]](http://www.ffa.org/news/html/ffapubsindex.html).

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 Horacio "Lacho" Garza
FFA Advisor, Sharyland FFA Chapter
Mission, Texas

Look Sharp, Be Sharp

i have the honor of representing agriculture teachers on the National FFA Board of Directors. During the July board meeting, the group spent considerable time addressing the topic of official dress because of continued concerns surrounding the expectations of official dress at FFA activities in general and the national FFA convention in particular.

Some of the key questions the board addressed include:

1. Does an advisor have the right to circumvent the national official dress policy at local functions?
2. Does the state have the right to circumvent the national official dress policy at state events?
3. How aggressive should the national staff be in enforcing the official dress policy at national activities, such as the convention?

While each advisor addresses the topic of official dress in his or her own way, the broad range of "acceptance" at the local and state levels creates serious issues at the national level.

As advisors, it is our responsibility to make sure our students are prepared for the FFA activities in which we expect them to participate. This goes

beyond technical information and skill sets to life lessons such as appropriate behavior and dress.

We've all heard the "dress for success" speech and know that we tend to feel better about ourselves when we're confident in how we look. When you're preparing students for an FFA activity, be sure to cover your expectations for official dress.

Here are some suggestions that have proven successful at our chapter:

- review the official dress policy while preparing for each activity
- travel in official dress
- if a student arrives inappropriately attired, give him or her the opportunity to change
- those who can't meet our expectations are not allowed to go; this strict policy leads to strong adherence to the dress code and pride in our chapter

When we, as local advisors, take responsibility for establishing high expectations for our students, they will respond. Whether it is a high level of academic achievement, technical skill or appropriate attire, if you set the standard, your students will work to meet it. Let's all work together to help our students look sharp and be sharp while attending the national FFA convention by strictly adhering to the official dress code. For more information, consult the *Official FFA Manual* or the *Convention Planning Guide*.



Create a Convention Calendar

the 2003 National FFA Convention will include a wide array of events, sessions, tours, workshops, entertainment and other learning experiences. All of the basic information you need to create a plan is available now, so don't wait until you arrive on site to start thinking about what sessions and workshops you'll attend. In addition, many of the tickets to popular events, such as concerts and dances, will be sold out through pre-registration purchases. Investing a little time now in creating a plan of action will serve you and your students well when you arrive in Louisville.

First, consider which students are attending and what their interests encompass. Not all activities are attractive to all students, so it will be important to gather your students' interests and ideas while creating your plan. Have your students review your copy of the *Convention Planning Guide*, or they can browse through the information online at [www.ffa.org/convention/index.html].

Next, start plotting out specific elements on a planning grid or calendar. A planning grid is included in the *Convention Planning Guide* and is also available online [http://www.ffa.org/convention/html/pln_adv_index.html]. You will want to include a healthy balance of elements—sessions, workshops, tours, the career show and, of course, entertainment. However, be sure you also block out time for reflection at the end of each day. This quiet time away from the bustle of the convention site will provide a chance for you to review each day's events with your students and reinforce what they are learning through the experience.

Once you have a plan mapped out, think about what you and your students can do to bring some of those lessons home and share them with other chapter members. Are there assignments you can give students now that they can complete at the convention? Are their opportunities you'd like them to focus on at the career show or in the workshops? Time on site will be scarce, so think through your options now and help students maximize their experience.

Convention Highlights

This year's convention will be the grand finale in the FFA at 75 celebration. For details, see page 7. In addition, this year's keynote speakers cover a broad swath of territory.

Dr. Lowell Catlett, a professor and agriculture futurist, will lead off the convention with a presentation at the opening sessions, Thursday, Oct. 30. This former FFA member and past national officer is a full-time professor at New Mexico State University. Drawing on his knowledge of emerging technologies and their implications on the way we live and work, Dr. Catlett will share a thought-provoking message that will entertain and astound as well as stretch your thinking as you ponder what the future holds.

Chad Varga, founder and president of INSPIRE, will launch the Friday morning session, Oct. 31. Despite growing up in a home riddled with drug abuse and violence, Varga locked onto a dream of playing professional basketball at an early age. After two seasons in the



European Professional League, Varga walked away from lucrative contract offers and started a non-profit organization to reach people through character-building seminars and presentations.

Robin Roberts, the popular news anchor for ABCNEWS *Good Morning America* program, will take the stage Friday evening. From early childhood, Roberts loved sports. She combined her passion for sports with an interest in journalism and proved that the world of sports broadcasting is no longer a male domain. Drawing on her life experiences and accomplishments, Roberts has an important message to share on leadership and success.

Christopher Stone will leave the convention with parting thoughts during Saturday's 12:30 session. Stone enlisted in the Army after graduating from high school and served in a variety of assignments at home and overseas. In March 1999, while on a routine peace-keeping patrol in Macedonia, Stone and two other soldiers were ambushed and captured by Yugoslavian forces. Stone's story of survival and faith is an inspiration to individuals and organizations alike.

 **Program Planning**

Glean Ideas at the Agriscience Institute

Wondering how you can integrate more science, math and social studies into your agriculture program? If you're seeking innovative ways to incorporate new technologies and current issues into lesson plans, you won't want to miss the Agriscience Institute at the 2003 National FFA Convention.

The Agriscience Institute will consist of a series of five hands-on workshops held in a hard-wall classroom located next to the Agriscience Fair in the career show. The topics covered will be:

- Bringing Sustainability to the Community
- Bringing Environmental Issues to the Classroom
- Applied Biotechnology
- Ag Prep: Integrating Math, Science and Technology
- Veterinary Science Instructional Materials and Related Equine Opportunities

Additional information regarding each of these workshops is available in the *Convention Planning Guide*, page 28, or online at [www.ffa.org]. The workshops are 45 minutes each and will rotate throughout the convention, with the classroom being open Wednesday, Oct. 29, from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.; Thursday, Oct. 30, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.; and Friday, Oct. 31, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. You'll need to check the signs in front of the classrooms for the schedule and starting times for each workshop.

Integrating Science and Math

"We hear from a lot of teachers who would like to add more science and math

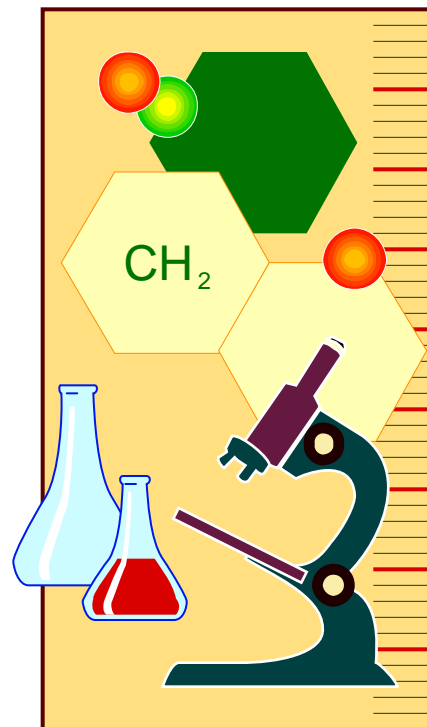
into their programs, but aren't sure how to accomplish the task," says Tony Small, Local Program Success manager with the National FFA Organization. "These workshops address this issue and will show teachers solid examples of how to implement activities in the classroom. We'll also cover ways of working with science and biology teachers within schools to integrate the educational process for students."

The Agriscience Institute evolved from a need voiced by teachers and offers of assistance from industry. "In discussions with DuPont, they indicated an interest in assisting teachers," Small says. "We modified some of the things they were already doing with science teachers and created this program for agriculture teachers. Texas Instruments was also interested in supporting this effort and is sponsoring the Ag Prep workshop."

By Teachers, For Teachers

Over the summer, six teachers from across the country attended intensive, week-long training sessions on the various topics. These teachers will be presenting the workshops at the convention.

Chris Dickson of North High School in Bakersfield, Calif., is one of the six teachers who will be presenting in Louisville. "Agriculture teachers are great at teaching many topics with hands-on activities," she says. "As the biotech industry grows, we need to teach skills in that area using similar techniques. These workshops will provide teachers with safe, effective activities to open the door to biotechnology in their programs. Whether you're already teaching biotechnology and looking for new ideas, or just getting your feet wet in the topic, these workshops will provide fun, simple ideas to implement in your classroom."



In one workshop, Dickson will conduct a DNA extraction activity. Participants will extract DNA from strawberries, bananas and wheat germ. "This is a really simple activity," Dickson says. "It vividly illustrates the topic and is so cool. The activity really is fun for the teacher and the students."

Dickson will also present an activity with sun-sensitive yeast that encourages students to design their own lab procedure. "The participants can try different options to see what items really work to screen out UV rays," she says. "We'll try different kinds of sunscreen and sunglasses to see what works."

The Agriscience Institute is sponsored by DuPont and Texas Instruments as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. The institute will also include a workshop on The Council's Veterinary Science Instructional Materials and related equine opportunities. These materials are sponsored by Intervet, Inc., and Pfizer Animal Health as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.



Tenth Annual PALS Mentoring Conference

the time for the 2003 National FFA Convention is drawing near and I would encourage advisors to consider participating in this year's National PALS Mentoring Conference. PALS is a youth mentoring program teaming FFA members with elementary students in a positive and collaborative effort to increase agricultural literacy, FFA membership and participation, student achievement, and attitudes toward healthy lifestyles.

As a result of a national effort to revitalize the PALS program, the 2003 National PALS Mentoring Conference will take on a new format. The 2003 conference will be held at the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center Oct. 29. Whether your chapter has an active PALS program or not, this conference will be an energetic start to this year's convention for you and your students. The PALS program is a wonderful opportunity for your chapter to live the last line of the FFA Motto, "living to serve."

The New Format

Those who have attended the National PALS Mentoring Conference are aware of the old format that included elementary students from the Louisville area in a morning of PALS activities. In light of the new materials and structure to the PALS program, the 2003 conference will be more instructionally based. We will tackle issues such as facilitation of PALS, the importance of mentoring to the community, how to incorporate healthy lifestyles activities, and best practices for success with the PALS program. As a result, the 2003 conference will be segmented into two sessions: beginner and advanced.

The Beginners Session

The beginners session will be a lively and informative workshop on how to start and operate a successful PALS program. It will feature advisors and members from FFA chapters with some of the most successful PALS programs in the country. They will provide information on how they started and how they dealt with common challenges and concerns along the way.

Advisors and members from these programs will also participate in roundtable discussions, sharing their ideas and processes. This session will allow those



interested in starting PALS programs to leave with a plan in hand to get involved with the PALS program. I encourage advisors to strongly consider making time to send members to this session to learn how to operate and implement one of the most outstanding community service programs available through FFA.

The Advanced Session

The advanced session will be an energetic workshop filled with information and instruction on the importance of mentoring programs to the community, how to evaluate the impact of your PALS



program and how to better incorporate healthy lifestyles activities. The highlight of this session will be our emcee, Mark Reardon.

Reardon is a nationally renowned, high-energy speaker in the field of education. He will share the message of how important PALS programs are to their communities and their futures. This session will also feature information on the evaluation and justification of your PALS program. Participants will learn how to gain national accreditation for their chapters as peer-mentoring programs. This session will be an excellent opportunity for those with existing PALS programs to get excited about the possibilities of their efforts and to learn how to build their program to the premier mentoring status.

Getting Involved

Each chapter that attends either of the two sessions will receive a free CD-ROM containing information on how to operate a successful PALS program. Whether PALS is new to your chapter or you have been involved for years, this CD will be an excellent resource for training your members and volunteers. If you are interested in attending the conference, we ask that you pre-register by September 27. For information on how to receive the pre-registration materials for the 2003 National PALS Mentoring Conference or for more information, please contact Mike Honeycutt at lmhoneycutt@ffa.org, or 317-802-4262.

By Mike Honeycutt

Education Specialist, National FFA Organization

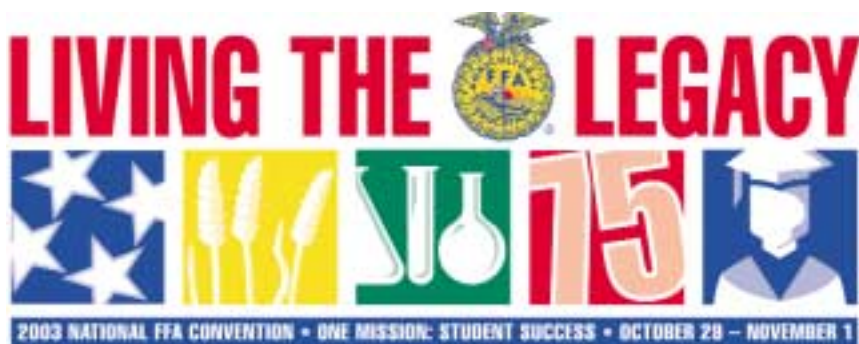


FFA at 75

many significant changes have occurred since the Future Farmers of America was founded in 1928. As our great nation changed, so did the organization. Agriculture was one of the first industries to recognize the contributions of women. In 1969, women became official members of FFA making it possible for them to hold office and participate in competitive events. Today, women hold more than 50 percent of the officer positions throughout the United States and compete equally with the men in local, state, regional and national events.

Other changes occurred because of advances in technology and science. The expansion of agriculture to include the food, fiber and natural resources industry opened up more than 300 career opportunities for agriculture students.

The name change in 1988—from Future Farmers of America to National FFA Organization—reflected the organization's growth beyond production agriculture to engage students from rural, suburban and urban areas in FFA and the study of agriculture in its broadest sense.



Yet, while many things have changed, the heart of FFA has not. The FFA mission to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success remains the same. The 12 simple words of the FFA motto – Learning to Do; Doing to Learn; Earning to Live; Living to Serve – are as meaningful today as they were 75 years ago, and as they will be 75 years in the future.

Living the Legacy

This year's convention theme graphic—Living the Legacy—is comprised of five individual symbols that reflect the FFA legacy:

- the white stars on a blue background represent American values and a love of country
- golden shafts of wheat honor our roots in production agriculture
- the green beakers signify advances in agricultural science and technology
- the number 75 salutes the 75 years of leaders who have built the organization
- the graduate signifies student success

This year's convention will include several elements to wrap up the year-long 75th anniversary celebration. The coffee-table book *Blue Jackets, Gold Standards* will be unveiled as will a segment of the PBS *Voices of Vision* special featuring FFA. A new time capsule will also be prepared and will contain articles from each state association.

The book will be sold at the convention and is available to order through the publisher. *Blue Jackets, Gold Standards* will begin shipping November 1. See FFA News on page 15 for ordering details.

Time Capsule

Today's students will honor the rich legacy of FFA and help leave their mark by assembling a time capsule during the 2003 convention. During this summer's FFA State Presidents' Conference, each state's delegation was asked to prepare items for inclusion in the time capsule and was given a specially-designed box in which to pack their articles.

In addition to the items each state is preparing for the time capsule, FFA chapter advisors and members are invited to submit their thoughts about where FFA has been as an organization and where it is going. You can submit your comments online at www.ffa.org. These forms will be collected and printed for the time capsule.



The time capsule opened at last year's convention was assembled and sealed at the 50th National FFA Convention.

Collegiate Connections

the National FFA Organization's mission statement is clear and concise – developing students' potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

For more than 75 years, the National FFA Organization has set the example of building premier leadership and personal growth skills in our membership. As we look to the future, we turn our attention to developing career success skills and increasing the connection to our partners in business and industry. Although education in the classroom, participation in a Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) and leadership and personal growth through FFA all potentially provide a student with career preparation skills, a concerted effort is being placed on developing connections between postsecondary students and their careers.



Discovering Needs

Since the collegiate specialist position was developed two years ago, significant time and energy have been spent to determine the needs and wants of those involved in postsecondary agricultural education. In this discovery phase, we interviewed and surveyed thousands of FFA members, advisors, educators and supporters through focus groups, task force meetings, interviews, workshops and informal conversations.

Using this information, we developed a plan that will allow students to have a seamless FFA transition from high school to college and/or the workforce. It will also allow National FFA to assist with recruitment of FFA Alumni members and to assist in maintaining connections with former members. Over the next year, watch for a new career planning and preparation site launching on [www.ffa.org] and other increased collegiate services through the National FFA.

Convention Activities

One of the best places to positively impact a large number of college students is the national FFA convention. Each year, the National Collegiate Agricultural Education Conference is held in conjunction with the FFA convention. This meeting brings together members of the Collegiate FFA and Alpha Tau Alpha (ATA), the national professional honorary agricultural education organization.

The conference includes both social and educational activities and is a venue in which the organization can deliver a key element – career success – to pre-service agricultural education students. The conference also includes competitive events such as a debate contest, an essay contest and an agriculture quiz bowl. All collegiate FFA chapters and members are eligible to participate in these Alpha Tau Alpha-sponsored events. For more information and to get the most up-to-date collegiate convention schedule, log on to the National FFA Organization's Convention homepage at [www.ffa.org/convention/index.html].

Many attendees also participate in workshops, leadership sessions, competitive events and assist in various ways throughout the convention. Even more college students attend the FFA convention to serve as state officers or official delegates, to operate a university career



By Jim Piechowski
Collegiate Specialist
National FFA Organization

show booth or to receive their American FFA Degree. Our goal is to create "collegiate connections" and provide direct career preparation workshops and opportunities for all postsecondary students attending the convention.

Coming Attractions

These services could range from career assessment tools to résumé and interview tips from business professionals. Plans for the 2004 convention include a Career Partnership Expo, which will allow postsecondary members to meet directly with business and industry representatives to discuss internship and career opportunities.

FFA is creating even more opportunities for postsecondary students and strengthening the link between collegiate FFA and the National FFA Organization. A new website was recently launched called the Collegiate Corner – an all-in-one place where students can search for information relevant to colleges and careers.

This web page will help college students and others quickly access all of the relevant materials on the ffa.org website for postsecondary students and begins to pull together resources available to college students. Visit online at [www.ffa.org/html/collegiateindex.html], and encourage your students who are in college to visit also.

If you have questions regarding collegiate services or collegiate events at the national FFA convention, please feel free to contact the Collegiate Services staff of the National FFA Organization at [collegiate@ffa.org], or by calling 317-802-4214 or 317-802-4220.



Participate in Delegate Business

a key part of each year's national FFA convention is the official business conducted by delegates representing each state. As part of the new delegate process being implemented this year, teachers and students are encouraged to become involved and share their thoughts on the issues.

On Wednesday morning, Oct. 29, teachers and students will be able to sign up to provide testimony on each of the delegate agenda items. There will be three different rounds of testimony. All the meetings will be held in a block of meeting rooms in the Executive West Hotel, located near the Kentucky Fair and Exposition Center.

The delegate process is launched each summer during the FFA State

Presidents' Conference where the state presidents and vice presidents receive training on the delegate process and select the issues submitted by states that will be included on the delegates agenda.

The items selected by participants at this summer's conference are as follows:

- Consider increasing the number of national officers (submitted by Maine and Texas)



- Consider requiring national officers to select nominating committee members who are not from their home states (submitted by Oklahoma)
- Consider allowing middle school students to compete in all career development events (submitted by Virginia and Louisiana)
- Consider offering additional career development events (submitted by Texas)
- Clarify criteria for collegiate FFA membership (submitted by Texas)
- Find/develop partnerships to promote FFA in more national media (submitted by South Carolina)
- Consider assigning new words to the acronym "FFA" (what does it stand for?) (submitted by Wisconsin)

Further details are available online at [\[www.ffa.org/convention.html/del_info.html\]](http://www.ffa.org/convention.html/del_info.html).



2003 National FFA Convention Fee Increase Reminder

the national FFA convention is known as one of the largest annual student gatherings in the world, and it is also one of the least expensive, particularly in view of its scope and amenities. Even so, costs for producing this premier educational and motivational activity have been rising.

To ensure everyone is prepared, FFA advisors are reminded that attendance fees for the 2003 National FFA Convention have been set at \$30 for pre-registration and \$35 for on-site registration. The \$5 increase in the convention fee was necessary to offset

significant and steadily increasing costs for services, decorations, staging, labor and security. As a break-even activity, convention costs are borne by participants and not by general membership dues. Activities for the National FFA Alumni convention and for the National FFA Foundation sponsors are not covered through the FFA convention registration fees.

Even with the approved increase, the \$30/\$35 fees for the FFA convention remain markedly lower than national meeting fees for other student organizations. VICA/Skills USA charges \$90/\$100; FCCLA charges \$100/\$110; and FBLA charges \$85/\$95. Fees for the National FFA convention remain the lowest of all career

and technical student organizations. The FFA convention fee covers attendance for the ticketed Wednesday Reflections program, convention general sessions and the FFA National Agricultural Career Show. Day passes and Career Show only passes will still be available. More details can be found in the *Convention Planning Guide* mailed to all chapters, or on [\[www.ffa.org\]](http://www.ffa.org).

Increases in the convention fee are scheduled periodically and are not expected to require adjustment for another five to seven years. This will cover the period of transition when the FFA convention is moved from Louisville to Indianapolis for a seven-year run beginning in 2006.



Electronic FFA Membership Management

With the roll-out of the Excel Electronic FFA Membership Process complete across the country, this year teachers will be updating rosters on their keyboards instead of marking up large sheets of paper with red ink.

Moving membership from a manual, labor-intensive process to an electronic process focused on capturing keystrokes is no small task. The transition has been occurring over several years and will eventually move from an Excel-based template system to an online system.

Kent Zeller, the FFA advisor at Ravenna High School, Nebraska, speaks highly of the process. "As a 30-year veteran, I'm sure I was chosen as a pilot school in the fall of 2002 to try electronic membership because if I could do it, then anyone could," Zeller says. He continues by listing the benefits of electronic membership:

- It's easier to open an attachment than an envelope.
- You don't have to rely on the U.S. Postal Service, just go to your e-mail.
- You can print your roster, make your changes, and e-mail it back to your state staff.
- The electronic system eliminates the expense of postage, envelopes and paper.

Marion Fletcher, state FFA advisor in Arkansas, says teachers can also use the data collected to communicate details about their programs. "The data collected will provide statistical information to the instructors, which will assist them in providing factual information to their administrators and communities regarding the true picture of their FFA chapters. Plus,

historical data will be available on membership for comparison on a yearly basis."

Increasing Efficiency

Now, take the efficiency concept to the state level and multiply it by the number of chapters in each state. No longer will state staff be keying in membership information from hand-written forms and trying to decipher handwriting. Once your state association has processed its membership, take the process to the next step—the national organization. At this level, the organization can increase efficiency in processing subscriptions to *FFA New Horizons*.

"What we've found in the past year is that simply by eliminating the hand-writing, we eliminate many errors in names and addresses," says Jim Armbruster, a Local Program Success specialist with the National FFA Organization. "We can also eliminate duplication and track students who move from chapter to chapter more easily. As an added bonus, the new system makes checking membership for degrees, career development events and awards much easier and faster. This saves staff time, which can then be devoted to other tasks."

Better Data, Better Service

Another benefit of the electronic system is its ability to capture demographic information directly from the field. As teachers complete the roster, they are asked to enter demographic information on themselves and their students.



FFA understands many advisors are hesitant to share this information. The organization is committed to protecting the privacy of its members and educators. It does not intend to sell its membership list or profit from it in any way. Whenever demographic information is cited, it will be anonymous, aggregated data, mentioning only statistics such as percentages of total membership or how the FFA membership gender ratio compares with other organizations.

"Before we had this system, FFA had to spend \$25,000–\$50,000 every couple years for a demographic study," Armbruster says. "We need the information so that we can better target our efforts to meet teacher and member needs. When we can get a more accurate picture of our membership through the roster process, we can better serve our constituents' needs in the services, materials and resources we provide."



TeacherSpotlight

Creating Success One Student at a Time

marion, Iowa, is a fairly typical Midwestern town. Located just outside Cedar Rapids, the Linn-Mar agriculture program here exemplifies what can happen when a teacher reaches out and focuses on student success.

In the late 1980s, the program was suffering from declining enrollment. A rapidly growing suburban population offered opportunity for growth, if the right niche could be found. Enter Dennis Selness and a winning aquaculture grant proposal. Selness transformed the program's greenhouse into an aquaculture facility and the rest, as they say, is history. The program's enrollment doubled in the first year, and the chapter is one of the most active in the state. Incidentally, Linn-Mar students have won the state aquaculture proficiency award for the past seven years running.

Engaging Students

"Denny found a way to engage students in his program through aquaculture," says Wayne Nattress, Iowa FFA Foundation executive director and former state FFA advisor. "He has an uncanny knack for helping students help themselves and getting people involved."

Josh Remington, who graduated from the Linn-Mar program in 2000, sheds light on Selness' techniques. "The way Mr. Selness teaches is unique and invaluable. During high school, my best friend and I were both involved in the school's aquaculture program. On the way to Louisville for the national FFA convention, we stopped in Greencastle, Ind., to tour their agriculture program's aquaculture facility.

Holy cow! We walked out of there dreaming of the possibilities.

Molding Dreams into Reality

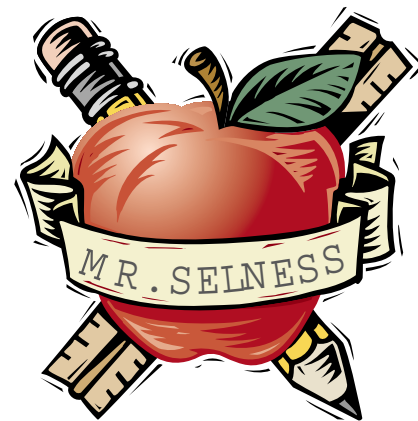
"On the way home from the convention, we discussed our plans until 2 a.m.—and we weren't speaking in terms of 'if.' We were talking about what we were going to build. We thought we had it all figured out. We'd ask the school board to add our plans to an existing school bond issue and we'd be on our way. Mr. Selness cautioned us that probably wouldn't work — and it didn't — but he did provide alternative avenues for us to pursue and provided the encouragement needed to keep us going."

Remington continues, "One of our fund-raising ideas was to raise a crop of poinsettias to sell as a holiday fundraiser. Of course, since we were on our way home from the convention, it was a little late to be getting started. Mr. Selness suggested we consider Easter lilies. This is typical of his whole teaching approach — get the students thinking, then help them make their ideas reality."

Josh and his friends, with assistance from Selness, led the architectural planning team and launched the fundraising effort to build a new aquaculture facility. Last year, that dream became a reality. The student-led effort raised \$134,000 in 14 months. The students proudly led the open house program last November.

Focusing on Students

Nattress adds, "I am always amazed when I visit the Linn-Mar program with how involved the students are. It truly is



their program. With Denny, the students are the focus. He is in the background."

Sonny Deke, an active member of the Linn-Mar FFA Alumni and a representative-at-large on the National FFA Alumni Council, was introduced to the agricultural education program and Mr. Selness when his daughter enrolled as a freshman. "I've seen the difference he's made in the lives of so many young adults and their parents," Deke says. "It's amazing to watch parents attend an FFA event and see what their children and others in the community are doing. They see the opportunities afforded through the FFA program, and they realize the doors that are open for their kids. Mr. Selness is the catalyst for all of it. I've learned a tremendous amount from him."

During this summer's Iowa teacher inservice session, Selness started experiencing severe headaches. A visit to the doctor's office revealed several brain tumors in locations difficult to reach. Selness is currently undergoing aggressive treatment in an effort to beat the less-than-positive prognosis.

Josh, who is now a junior at Iowa State University majoring in landscape architecture, says, "I am where I am because of Mr. Selness. I will be receiving my American FFA Degree in October because of him. Most young people describe their teachers as mentors and friends, but Mr. Selness is so much more. He brings people together to form one big family. I hope and pray we can help him beat this disease."

📧 Messages of encouragement can be sent to: Dennis Selness, 1310 Terrace St., Marion, IA 52302.

 **Professional Growth**

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Local Program Success

Helping Visually Impaired Students Succeed

When school starts this fall, Mike McDaniel will be facing a new challenge in his Parkers Prairie, Minn., agriculture classroom. One of the students enrolled in his introduction to agriculture class is visually impaired.

"I've had a student in a wheelchair before, and I've worked with other students with other impairments, but I've never had a student who can't see before," McDaniel says. "I'm sure we'll figure things out as we go along."

Reaching Out

Several others will assist McDaniel in that process. Marilyn Anderson is a teacher who specializes in assisting visually impaired students in the Freshwater Education District. When the visually-impaired student signed up for McDaniel's agriculture class last spring, Anderson contacted McDaniel inquiring what textbooks he used so she could start the proverbial ball rolling to secure materials the student could use.

"The first step in assisting visually impaired students is making sure they have access to the same materials the other students have," Anderson says. "Depending on the level and type of visual impairment, we can create different materials to meet student

needs. Sometimes we can provide the materials in large print, with high color contrast, on tape or in Braille, or we can convert some graphic items into tactile elements—maps, diagrams and such."

In the case of McDaniel's student, Anderson had to find a way to convert McDaniel's first two resources – the *FFA Student Handbook* and the *Official FFA Manual* – into usable items for the student. She contacted Jim Armbruster, who manages educational resources at the National FFA Organization, and requested FFA provide the two documents in Microsoft Word format. From that format, Anderson can translate the documents into one of several different formats for use by visually impaired students. "In this case, I had the text set into larger type so the student could read it," Anderson says.

Rewarding Experience

Anderson continues, "I try to tell teachers not to fear working with special-needs students. These students can usually do more than you expect. They may need to do things differently or they may need information presented in a different manner, but teaching special-needs students can be very rewarding."

McDaniel confirms Anderson's sentiment. "I had a student several years ago in a wheelchair," he says. "When it came time for the class to go into the shop and learn how to oxy-acetylene weld, the welding tables were too high for him to use. I challenged a couple of my other students to construct a table the wheelchair-bound student could use. They took control, built the table and helped him make the necessary equipment adjustments. The students took ownership – they wanted him to succeed just as badly as I did. It was a very rewarding experience."

Finding Resources

If you have visually impaired students in your classroom, electronic text files for preparation of materials for the visually impaired can be obtained by contacting the National FFA Organization educational resource specialist, Jim Armbruster, via e-mail at jarmbruster@ffa.org.



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.

Special Needs Assistance

based on recommendation and guidance from the National FFA Board of Directors, a new special needs assistance policy and procedure was put in place for the 2003 Career Development Events (CDEs).

The basics of the new policy surrounds a change in the method of determining what situations require accommodations and how those accommodations are to be provided.

Based upon review of federal legislation, it was determined that accommodations be

offered only to those students who have medically diagnosable physical or mental disabilities. This was the best way for the National FFA to operate within federal guidelines and be as inclusive as possible without undermining the educational integrity of the CDE program.

Another key element of this effort has been partnership and collaboration with agencies qualified and accredited in special needs assistance. They've assisted with the decision-making process regarding how to provide accommodations in these events. This partnership is important to add validity to our process and help the

National FFA Organization provide the best service to our physically and mentally disabled members.

As we look to the future, we will need to revise this process and determine the most successful methods of delivering special needs assistance. Once the best practices are determined, we may expand this policy to fit the many other educational programs offered by the National FFA Organization. Another hope is that this policy can help state FFA associations and local FFA chapters as they try to determine how to deal with the special needs assistance issue.



By Mike Honeycutt
Education Specialist
National FFA Organization

More information on the National FFA policy and procedure for special needs assistance in career development events can be found on the web at [www.ffa.org/programs/cde/html/cdeupdate.html].

For further assistance or information on this policy, please contact Mike Honeycutt at [mhoneycutt@ffa.org] or by calling 317-802-4262.



Let's Get Together!

the 2003 National FFA Convention is fast approaching and that means auction time! The National FFA Alumni Association will host the live auction at 6 p.m., Friday, Oct. 31.

A silent auction will run Oct. 29-31. Numerous companies and individuals have generously donated items to help the alumni raise funds for WLC scholarships and chapter grants. Donations for the auction are always welcome. If you are interested, contact Amber Smyer at [asmyer@ffa.org], or bring items with you to convention. All donations must be

at the auction site before noon on Wednesday, Oct. 28. While at the convention, be sure to set aside some time to bid on the many great items available, including the Chevy Silverado!

Raffles

This year there will be two raffles. The first raffle will be for a John Deere Gator. All tickets for this item will be sold prior to the convention. If you are interested in purchasing a ticket for the Gator, contact the National FFA Alumni at 317-802-4292.

The second raffle will be for an EZ-GO WorkHorse donated by Tractor Supply Company and a Husqvarna YTH2046 Tractor. Tickets for these items will be sold throughout convention for

\$1. Look for the Alumni raffle booth in the center aisle of the convention shopping mall to purchase tickets. The National FFA Alumni Association would like to thank John Deere, EZ-GO a Textron Company, Tractor Supply and Husqvarna for donating these items. The winner's names will be drawn during the live auction on Friday evening (you need not be present to win).

State Basket Contest

It's not too late to show pride in your state by entering the Alumni State Basket Contest. Baskets will be judged and the top three will be sold during the live auction. The top three bas-



By Frank Saldaña
Executive Director
National FFA Alumni Association

kets also earn prizes for their states. Best Overall receives a \$450 WLC Scholarship; President's Choice receives a \$125 registration fee to the State Alumni Leaders Conference; and People's Choice receives 100 tickets for the Alumni Raffle. For more information on the State Basket Contest, contact Amber Smyer at [asmyer@ffa.org] or 317-802-4294.



TeacherResources

LPS Staff a Key Resource

The Local Program Success (LPS) work group is an important segment of the Education Division at the National FFA Organization. The LPS group may be new to you as it is a result of the restructuring process. The LPS staff members listed on page 12 have many years experience in the classroom as well as additional years of state and national experience in agricultural education.

With their knowledge base and experience in agricultural education, they have been tasked with providing quality customer service to teachers, teacher educators, state staff, alumni and key partners in all areas of agricultural education. The LPS staff serves a vital role in promoting and supporting all members of Team Ag Ed and all programs and services developed and delivered by the National FFA Organization. The LPS group serves as a key contact with customers in need of information or assistance with agricultural education programs. If you need assistance, please use the contact information on page 12. Select the LPS staff member in your area or that best suits your needs. LPS staff is always available for assistance; please feel free to call.



NAAE Has Moved

The National Association of Agricultural Educators has successfully moved into its new offices in Kentucky. The new contact information follows:

National Association of Agricultural Educators

300 Garrigus Building, UK Campus
Lexington, KY 40546-0215

voice: 859-257-2224 or 1-800-509-0204

fax: 859-323-3919; Web site: [www.naae.org].

Infusing Philanthropy into the Curriculum

Looking for ways to teach your students about philanthropy? Click on [www.learningtogive.org] for lesson plans and more. The site offers a broad and diverse selection of material for classroom and training use in relation to infusing philanthropy into one's educational/instructional programming. The 500 free lesson plans available have been classroom teacher-tested, have met Michigan's state standards (they are being adapted to meet Indiana's state standards), have been structured based on core democratic values, and have been designed to thoroughly embrace diversity (i.e., meticulously reviewed for gender, language, culture). You might find the site useful as you plan training sessions, curricula, or presentations that need a service learning/volunteerism component.

Improving Student Achievement in Science

The National Agricultural Education Research Workgroup was formed to summarize the research related to effective teaching practices in secondary school-based agricultural education programs that support student achievement in math, science and reading, draw conclusions and make recommendations that will support effective practices and additional research.

The first product of the workgroup is a monograph, "Improving Student Achievement in Science: An Important Role for Secondary Agricultural Education in the 21st Century." This document is posted as part of The Council's Action Agenda at [www.agedhq.org/actionagenda.htm].

Hispanic Education Statistics

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report, "Status and Trends in the Education of Hispanics," examines the current

condition and recent trends in the educational status of Hispanics in the United States. It draws on the many statistics published by NCES in a variety of reports and synthesizes this data in one compact volume. In addition to indicators drawn from existing government reports, some indicators were developed specifically for this report. This popular report now has many sections and tables Web-enabled for easy reference. To view this report, please visit [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/hispanics/].

Math and Science Education: A Changing Culture

A new report, "Learning for the Future: Changing the Culture of Math and Science Education to Ensure a Competitive Workplace," investigates the challenges confronting math and science educators from the perspective of cultural change. The culture surrounding math and science achievement is often negative. Students who succeed in these fields are often dismissed by their peers, while a culture of low expectations burdens other groups, perpetuating their under representation in the professional technical labor force. To address these issues, the Committee for Economic Development (CED) calls for the implementation of a strategic plan that will increase student "demand" for higher achievement in mathematics and science. For more information and a copy of the report, visit [www.ced.org].

FREE Resource

The FREE (Federal Resources for Educational Excellence) Web site has been selected as a "Best Bet" by USA Today Education. More than 30 federal agencies formed a working group in 1997 to make hundreds of federally supported teaching and learning resources easier to find. The result of that work is the FREE Web site. For an overview of what's available at FREE, please visit [www.ed.gov/free/index.html].

President Bush Greet FFA State Presidents

This summer, FFA members had the experience of a lifetime when they met President George W. Bush. More than 100 state FFA officers gathered in Washington, D.C., in late July as part of the National FFA State Presidents' Conference (SPC). FFA members further developed leadership and citizenship skills while discussing national FFA business.

Highlights of the conference were meeting with the president and Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. President Bush voiced his support for the agricultural industry and the role it plays in national security, producing an abundant and safe food supply and nur-

turing strong family values. In addition, the president urged FFA members to take responsibility for their actions and serve something greater than themselves, stating that all leaders have an obligation to help others.

He encouraged students to mentor a child, visit a shut-in and seek ways to put hope back in the hearts of Americans, as "millions of single acts of kindness will bring about change." Members left inspired and eager to return to their local communities to impact the lives around them.



Chevy Trucks and GMAC (General Motors Acceptance Corporation) sponsor SPC as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

Veterinary School News

The University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine has recently developed a unique program that may be of interest to FFA members. Seniors in high school are offered an assurance of admission to veterinary school if they complete a structured undergraduate curriculum in animal sciences at the University of Missouri. The program is described in some detail in a recent issue of the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. For more information, visit www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/jul03/030715h.asp

Communicating Support for Ag Ed

The Council ad hoc committee for Communicating Support for Ag Ed is encouraging the business community to sign petitions in support of funding for Career and Technical Education, of which agricultural education is a part. FFA members visiting their congressional representatives as part of the Washington Leadership Conference this summer provided information

for members of Congress and their staffs. This information provides a thank-you to members of Congress for visiting with FFA, makes the connection between FFA and agricultural education, and then to CTE, and ultimately, to federal funding. It is hoped this concerted effort will raise the general awareness of FFA on Capitol Hill. All of this is in support of 2004 CTE funding and the consideration for reauthorization of future CTE funding.



Blue Jackets; Gold Standards

The 75th anniversary book, *Blue Jackets; Gold Standards*, is now available for ordering. The book, written by Paul Miner, commemorates 75 years of the legacy of FFA. Though volumes could and should be published about the FFA, FFA staff have chosen to show and

describe the 75-year saga of this premier youth organization through the faces and words of those who forged the legacy, and those who today have accepted and carry the standard.

The 160-page coffee-table book relates a story of an inspiring past and present through words and photos (both black-and-white and color). *Blue Jackets, Gold Standards* reviews, in a glance, the past deeds of members, advisors and the progenitors of FFA. The staff hopes this free-flowing collection of thoughts and impressions typify the spirit of FFA, through the words and works of members and teacher-advisors over the years. Not a running history of FFA, it is a reflection of its people and the spirit of the FFA; for FFA is not so much an organization as the people who populate it.

To order your copy of *Blue Jackets: Gold Standards* for \$29.95 plus \$7.00 shipping and handling, visit MT Publishing online at www.MTPublishing.com, or call 1-888-263-4702. Books will be available for shipping November 1. The book is not available through the FFA order department.