

NEW VISIONS



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL FFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Volume 1, Issue 2
April/May 1996

TY ENGLAND ALUMNI RECRUITS COUNTRY STAR AS SPOKESPERSON

In March this year, country music star Ty England agreed to serve as the FFA Alumni Association's national spokesperson.

Reaching for the Stars

"The alumni association and Ty England have a lot in common. We both believe in agriculture, education and America's young people," says Ricardo Valencia, national FFA alumni executive director. "This partnership will help communicate the message that the alumni association is for everyone and promote the need for community and family involvement in education."

In the Beginning

England's first claim to fame started with country music great Garth Brooks in 1988. The day Brooks signed a contract with Capital Records, he asked England to join his band and move to Nashville. Originally, both were college singing buddies and roommates.

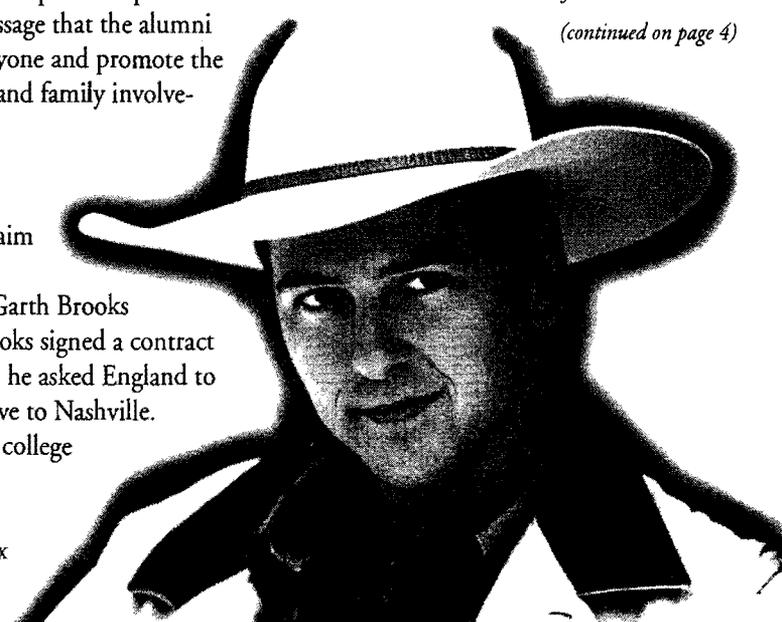
For more than six years, he played and

sang for Brooks' band before launching his own solo career. During late 1994, he signed a contract with RCA and finished his first album shortly thereafter.

On His Own

The first single from England's self-titled album, "Should've Asked Her Faster," was a top five hit on *Billboard's* Country Singles Chart and clearly established him as one of country music's brightest new talents. England went on to earn "Song of the Year" and "International Rising Star" nominations at the Great British Country Music Awards. He has been a finalist as *Performance*

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COMING UP IN JUNE

Your next issue of *New Visions* will arrive in mid-June. Along with regular news, expect articles and feature stories on the following

Ty England Shares Life's Dream

Building Successful Programs With Advisors

Recruiting Alumni Volunteers—Part II

Crafting Messages To Reinforce Alumni Mission

Alumni Get-Together Planned

FFA Alumni *New Visions* is prepared and published bimonthly by the National FFA Alumni Association as an affiliate of the National FFA Organization in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Education as a service to state and local agricultural education agencies.

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

The FFA Alumni Mission

The National FFA Alumni Association provides a structure that will mobilize and empower community volunteers to support and assist local, state and national agricultural education programs in providing quality educational experiences.

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Ricardo L. Valencia
Executive Director
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ROUND TABLE

CHANGES...

As you begin to read this issue of *New Visions*, the primary message that is communicated in several articles is *change*. Change in the national association. Change in the image. Change in the policies and our national constitution. Change in the *way* we do business.

It is important for all of us to understand that the changes that are occurring are for *you* the members of the National FFA Alumni Association and for the young men and women of the FFA.

Each of us as parents, teachers, former members and school administrators are responsible both individually and collectively for the fate of agricultural education and FFA at the local, state and national levels. And it is our responsibility to make the necessary changes in our association to ensure that each of us has the information and resources available to positively impact our programs.

Change will occur anytime an association begins to examine what the preferred future shall be. It will occur anytime an association begins to examine what it really wants instead of only what it thinks is possible or the intermediate steps of getting there. Change will most certainly occur when an association chooses to be exciting, motivating and compelling.

I can assure you that your elected alumni leaders are conscientiously making

the advances necessary to move this association forward. They are choosing to generate ownership among our association's membership and move toward what our mission is all about.

I personally hope that you find our new vision uplifting and exciting!

Your national staff felt that it would be important to share with you a passage that we live by every day of the week. We hope you enjoy it. ☐

**Bite off more than you can chew,
then chew it.**

**Plan more than you can do,
then do it.**

**Point your arrow at a star,
take your aim, and there you are.**

**Arrange more time than you can spare,
then spare it.**

**Take on more than you can bear,
then bear it.**

**Plan your castle in the air,
then build a ship to take you there.**



BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS



MARKETING GOOD NEWS to Superintendents

Superintendents need to hear how agricultural education provides real-life solutions.

"By showing how programs adds value," says Dr. Joyce Winterton of National FFA's Partner Development Team, "alumni can build bridges and add a little good news to a superintendent's hectic day."

Important Issues

Bring key players, including superintendents, together and explain how agricultural education and FFA provide solutions to problems and issues facing the school district. When speaking, be sure to stress how your local program:

- improves student achievement through practical application of math, science and English;
- helps students apply new technology;
- improves self-esteem because students experience success;
- reduces drug and alcohol abuse by providing meaningful activities;
- helps at-risk students set and accomplish goals and gives them tangible reasons to stay in school; and
- involves parents directly in the program.

"I'm no longer a supporter of FFA; now I'm an advocate."

—Dr. Peter Behnke, school superintendent

Practical Insight

To explore this topic further, *New Visions* interviewed Dr. Peter Behnke, administrator for Bonduel School District in northeastern Wisconsin.

Q How do your responsibilities affect the local program?

A Since resources are limited, decisions concerning staff and

budgets impact local programs. My goal is to balance resources and program needs. When local programs are a key school component, superintendents are more apt to give their fullest support.

Q How can alumni members develop win-win partnerships with local superintendents?

A Members are encouraged to visit their schools frequently. Programs are constantly changing and improving; we need innovative ideas. Alumni are welcome to attend school events, observe students in their daily classes and provide feedback.

(continued on page 8)

NEWS you can USE



Monsanto Assists in Marketing FFA.

The National FFA Organization has begun a two-year initiative to help agriculture teachers and students market their local programs to their communities. The project called "Leadership for a New Millennium" is sponsored by Monsanto Crop Protection as a special project of the National FFA Foundation and will provide teachers with resources and in-service training in marketing concepts. Students will be encouraged to implement marketing plans to increase local enrollment while developing transferable job skills. The initiative hopes to reduce barriers to local growth by identifying and building support among key community partners. It will also focus on teacher and student recruitment and retention. For more, contact Greg Egan at 703-360-3600, Ext. 264 or Mark Timm, Ext. 325.

National FFA Funds Local Program

Success. The National FFA Board approved in late January \$167,000 in funding for a project to strengthen local agricultural education programs. Managed by the National Council of Agricultural Education in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Education, the project seeks to compile strategies and activities used by successful teachers and programs, develop appropriate tools where needed and provide support to advisors through state in-service.

Building quality local programs will attract support from local partners and increase program value to students. The project will focus on six key areas ranging from classroom/laboratory instruction to mobilizing volunteers. For more contact Dr. Rosco Vaughn, 703-360-8832 or C. Coleman Harris, 703-360-3600, Ext. 202. ☐

ANNIVERSARY

Plans Underway for 25th Anniversary Convention

National FFA Alumni staff are busily preparing for the association's 25th anniversary convention, November 15-16 in Kansas City, Mo. Participants will see changes this year in the convention's format and attractions.

Weekend Offers Benefits

Instead of a regular mid-week, one-day convention, registrants will find a two-day event scheduled for Friday and Saturday. Alumni members should find it easier to attend a weekend conference than a mid-week event.

Since the conference is held at the same time as the National FFA Convention, the reason for the new schedule was based on the difficulty in finding rooms for alumni attendees earlier in the week, explains Ricardo Valencia, national FFA alumni executive director. Beginning Friday morning, approximately 4,000 rooms within a 20-mile radius of downtown Kansas City typically become available for convention participants."

The move will allow for special weekend hotel and activities packages for conference participants and alumni members.

Amendments To Be Considered

The National FFA Alumni Council will present eight constitutional amendments to delegates at this year's convention. (For more specific information, see "Council Approves

Policy Changes and Amendments" on page 7.)

Auction Boost

The new schedule has alumni officials optimistic about an increase in FFA alumni auction earnings, too. Auction items will be displayed beginning on Wednesday with hopes of building anticipation for the Friday evening bidding. A Friday auction will allow more students, parents and adults to attend, Valencia says.

Groups Targeted

One other benefit of the schedule change is the opportunity for the National FFA Alumni Association to target promotions to two key groups: parents and young adults.

On Friday, approximately 2,500 American FFA Degree recipients and their families will arrive for a Saturday afternoon ceremony. Beside co-sponsoring the afternoon luncheon for recipients, the national association plans to include membership information and applications in their degree packets.

"This provides us with a chance to attract and work with a membership that is very important to us," Valencia says. "Alumni convention participants will mingle and share our new vision with degree recipients and their parents."

Convention Highlights

Plans include moving the entire National FFA Alumni Convention from Bartle Hall 2210C to the Conference Center 4300 where the "Taste of Kansas City" reception and auction have been held for the

past few years. Tentative highlights include the following:

HIGHLIGHTS

Friday, November 15

1:00-4:00 p.m.

6:00 p.m.

7:30 p.m.

Opening Session
"Taste of FFA in Kansas City" Reception
FFA Alumni Auction
(Open to Public)

Saturday, November 16

8:30-10:30 a.m.

10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

1:00-3:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

Second Session
American FFA Degree/
Alumni Luncheon
Third Session
25th Anniversary
Celebration

TY ENGLAND

Alumni Recruits Country Star as Spokesperson
(Continued from page 1)

Magazine's "New Touring Act of the Year," while *Music City News* has recently nominated him for "Rising Star—Male."

Convention Promotions Planned

"We hope to make Ty an integral part alumni promotions," says Jim Waller, alumni marketing consultant. "Plans are underway to include Ty at this year's national convention and have him sign autographs at National FFA Agricultural Career Show in Kansas City."

Editor's Note: Watch the June issue for an in-depth interview with Ty England on his musical career

Starting Local Program

With more than 37 years of educational experience, Dr. Barbara Price knows what it takes to start a successful agricultural education program.

“Get the community behind the move,” she says. “Once

parents understand their children aren't taking just another vocational education class, they'll support you all the way.”

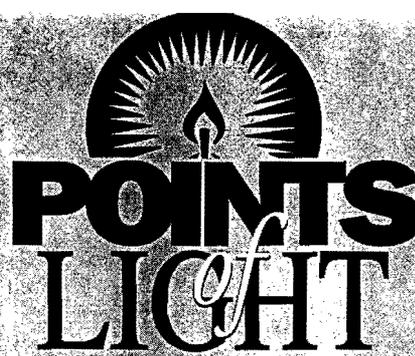
Show parents how agricultural education classes and FFA make academic subjects come alive. Talk about how students write and give speeches or learn about photosynthesis in practical ways.

Other steps to establish agricultural education locally or in another school district:

1. Have students who have high school agricultural education talk to those who don't have one.
2. Bring students and parents who don't have a local program to the state and national FFA conventions or your local meeting.
3. Invite a board member to join your alumni affiliate.

Be sure to inform the local principal and superintendent first about your plans, cautions Price. “Local administrators are key to getting a program started and need to be kept in the loop.”

Agricultural education and FFA are needed more than ever, especially in California, she believes. “Agribusiness is our state's number one industry. For years students were not preparing for these careers, and that's critical for this state and our nation.”



CALIFORNIA EDUCATOR ENDORSES FFA FOR EVERY SCHOOL

For Dr. Barbara Price, the student organization plaques that adorn her Chapman University office walls represent 37 years of student success and a valuable part of today's high schools.

Making Connections

“FFA provides real-world applications and forms a foundation for students to build upon,” explains Price, Chapman's education programs director. Prior to her current post, she was a business teacher for 21 years and a vocational administrator for 16 years.

As a vocational administrator for both Vista and Pomona, Calif., schools, she encouraged and assisted in starting agricultural education programs and local FFA chapters.

“Every high school student should experience a student organization which relates to their future goals,” she asserts. “I can't imagine a school without an FFA chapter or agricultural education.”

Studies Show Value

To support her point, Price cites a California vocational study, which shows significant student drop-out rates in schools that don't have a strong community agricultural education and other vocational programs.

“Organizations such as FFA promote life-long involvement more than any other after-school activities,” she

explains. “Without this connection, we found that students showed their disenchantment with education by leaving school.”

Through agricultural education, students become participants rather than a drain on society, she adds. “Many faculty have commented how different students are after they graduate from the agricultural education program and FFA.”

Applied Science

Some skills gained include an application of science, Price explains that while at Vista, the agricultural education program became one of the first to have its courses accepted for science credit in the state.

“There was never any doubt that agricultural education was a highly-scientific program,” she recalls. “The agriculture instructor started teaching in the science department. After the agricultural facilities were built, the science teachers didn't want to let him leave because he had added so much to their curriculum.”

Helping All Students

Agricultural education's success is not limited to those students interested in the agricultural industry.

“Our first greenhand award went to a learning disabled student,” she adds. “He was everyone's choice. While most people would have written him off, he stayed with the program thanks to his fellow students and now works in the agricultural program at a local community college.”

All students need guidance and agriculture helps them do better, explains Price. “Agricultural education stretches kids to be their best.”

Among Friends

Part I



Susan Ellis, Author of
The Volunteer Recruitment Book

VISION

Alumni Recruitment Member

Is your alumni affiliate constantly recruiting new people because current members or volunteers are leaving? Or do you find it difficult to get members involved? There are right—and wrong ways—to ask people to join and keep them motivated, says Susan Ellis, author of *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*.

Recruitment Is Last Step

While most affiliates experience a rise and fall in membership periodically, the key to retention seems to rest with how and why people were initially recruited.

As an internationally-known volunteer leader and presenter for more than 20 years, Ellis says the trouble starts when “organizations jump the gun, spreading word of their hope for volunteer help or members prematurely.”

“Without preparation,” she continues, “they run the risk of bringing out people who do not really meet their needs and are wrong for them.”

Local affiliates that don't know why they want volunteer members may find recruiting difficult, Ellis suggests.

First Step:

Set a Vision

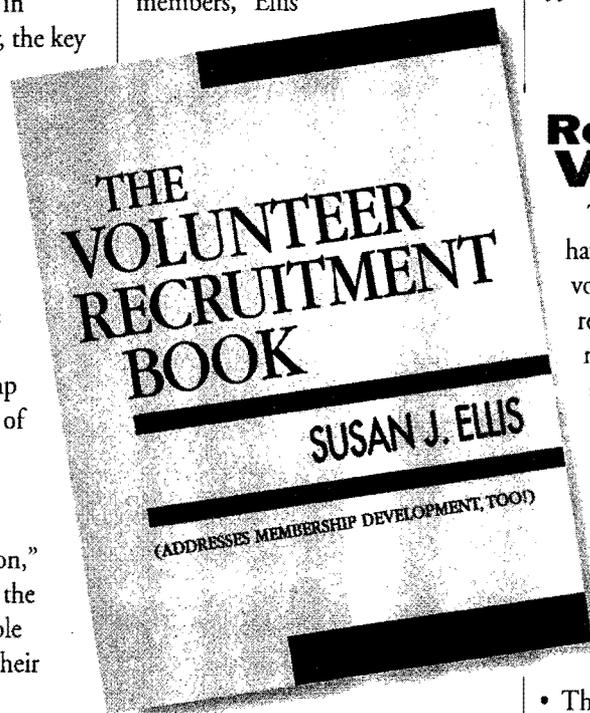
Having members or volunteers is not an end unto itself, cautions Ellis. “They are a *resource* and a *strategy* for fulfilling the

alumni's mission.”

Here are some suggestions:

- Take time to write down your affiliate's reasons for involving members and make sure everyone—advisor, officer team and recruitment committee—agrees.
- Review the alumni mission and determine what members are expected to do.
- Set specific goals and objectives for members. Ask: How will they make a difference in supporting agricultural education and FFA?
- Annually review and revise your affiliate's goals and objectives for member participation.

“Raise your affiliate's vision about the potential for alumni members,” Ellis



asserts. “Expanded vision produces expanded results.”

Finding Members

“It is not enough to say we need members,” Ellis adds. “Developing specific jobs to recruit different types of volunteers can help gain and retain members long-term.”

For example, if you're looking

to raise funds for new computer equipment, search for someone whose occupation involves computers or proposal writing.

Creating job descriptions for volunteer members can provide needed focus. A committee of advisors, alumni and FFA officers, and others who will eventually work with members need to develop these assignments.

“Allow the work to direct you to the potential members,” she advises. “That's a lot better than, ‘You've got a pulse, you're in.’”

Editor's Note: This is the first in a three-part series to help you recruit, manage and motivate local alumni members. Part II will offer tips on analyzing your local recruitment strategies, selling the benefits of joining and setting member objectives.

Reasons for Volunteer

There are many reasons for having members who eventually volunteer their time and resources. Though limited money is a valid reason for asking people to join, “never say that volunteers ‘save’ money because it's not true,” says Ellis. Rather, describe membership as a means to “stretch the budget.” Alumni members help local programs in the following key ways:

- They offer support and build credibility with local administrators, legislators or business people.
- They increase the influence and impact in the community and local program.
- They can focus their skills on specific projects that support FFA locally.

For more information or on how to obtain a copy of *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*, call Energize, Inc. at 800-395-9800 or by fax 215-438-0434.

COUNCIL APPROVES POLICY CHANGES AND AMENDMENTS

The National FFA Alumni Council approved two policy changes and eight constitutional amendments during its January 1996 meeting.

Policies Changed

Effective immediately, the council omitted two articles from the National FFA Alumni Association Operating Policies. They stated that:

- a \$500 scholarship be provided to the national FFA and past national FFA officer representatives upon completing their one year of service on the council; and
- two scholarships for the Presidential Classroom Conference be provided for high school juniors and seniors.

"We changed these two policies due to a redirection and refocus of alumni programs," Dr. Ray Herren, national FFA alumni president.

Amendments Approved

The council also approved eight constitutional amendments to be presented to delegates at the 1996 National FFA Alumni Convention in Kansas City, Mo.

"Our aim is to operate the council more effectively and increase the involvement of the membership in the decisions of the association," explains Herren. "Other amendments such as the change in the membership year will help manage membership and awards programs more efficiently."

Amendments are listed with the corresponding article and section for reference:

Article II, Section A-1a: This amendment establishes a national nominating committee to screen candidates for national alumni office. The five-member committee appointed by the national alumni president, consisting of council representatives, will identify two qualified candidates for each position, unless only one candidate is considered eligible.

Article II, Section A-1d: This amendment

adds a clause that states that no council member may serve consecutive terms on the National FFA Alumni Council. Any elected or appointed council representative shall have to wait a minimum of five years before possible re-election.

Article II, Section B-2: This one toughens an existing policy for council meeting attendance by specifying that no elected or appointed representative may miss more than two meetings. Upon doing so, that council member would be asked to resign and the vacancy filled based upon existing policies.

Article II, Section F-1 and Section F-2: These two amendments allow for convention delegates at the National FFA Alumni Convention to elect the National FFA Alumni president and vice-president. According to Herren, this amendment allows members more ownership in the leadership of the association through the direct election of these officers. Currently, only the National FFA Alumni Council selects individuals for these offices.

Article II, Section F-3: This amendment explicitly states that the office of National FFA Alumni vice-president is not that of president-elect.

Article VII, Section C: This amendment changes the annual membership year from a calendar year, running from January 1 through December 31, to one beginning on August 1 and ending July 30.

(continued on page 8)



Interviewing the Reporter

The more you prepare, the better the interview and the greater support you can give FFA and agricultural education. Here are some questions worth considering:

- 1. Who is the reporter?** Read, watch and listen to how this reporter treats agricultural education and FFA issues. Anticipate possible questions.
- 2. Who is the audience?** To develop appropriate interview messages, you must know who the listeners, viewers or readers will be.
- 3. What is the interview topic?** Determine how much the interviewer knows. If needed, send background information.
- 4. When and where will the interview take place?** Set some time limits, usually 30 minutes. Choose a time when you are at your best. Find an interesting and comfortable place to conduct the interview, especially if done for television.
- 5. Why is the interview being done?** Try to get an idea of what's on the reporter's mind—what is the ultimate purpose and why were you called.
- 6. What is the local situation?** Call the advisor and discuss what's happening locally, vital facts and names.

Source: Susan Peterson Productions Inc. (SPPI), 1993. For more information, contact SPPI at 202-463-0505 or 800-929-SPPI and on e-mail: sppi@ix.netcom.com.

Editor's Note: This section offers tips and advice on how to strengthen local support. Send your suggestions, ideas or activities that have worked for you to New Visions.





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**COUNCIL APPROVES POLICY
CHANGES AND AMENDMENTS**

(Continued from page 7)

Article VIII, Section A: The final proposed amendment raises life membership dues to a \$500.00 one-time payment from \$150.00 currently.

According to Herren, the National FFA Alumni Association begins to lose money after five years on every life member and does not generate enough interest revenue from each member to pay for services. Plus, giving the money back also affects the association's future financial stability.

For a copy of the proposed amendments or to provide comments, contact Ricardo Valencia, national FFA alumni executive director, 703-360-3600 or on e-mail: ricardo_valencia@ffa.org. ☐

**Marketing Good News to
Superintendents**

(Continued from page 3)

Q What experiences can help superintendents see the value of local programs?

A Many administrators lack an appreciation for agricultural related industries because of limited experiences. Touring agribusinesses will help. Alumni need to extend invitations to FFA events and alumni activities as well as share meaningful experiences verbally.

Q Your first experience with FFA occurred at the 1994 National FFA Convention. Would you recommend that alumni bring their superintendents along?

A My administrative colleagues should all be required to attend. The observations would be far more beneficial than time spent at any workshop. I saw an impressive display of skills and talent from around the country. No educator could attend and leave without a renewed confidence in the future. Any program which can produce such impressive results needs all the support possible. ☐

CALENDAR
APRIL thru JULY



APRIL 24-28
**National FFA Alumni Council
Strategic Planning Meeting**
Covington, GA

JUNE 1
**Outstanding Achievement Awards
Applications Due**

**National Alumni Council
Nominations for Member-at-Large
Position Due**

**State Resolutions and
Constitutional Amendments for
National Consideration Due**

JULY 22-28
**FFA Alumni State Leaders'
Conference—Washington, D.C.**