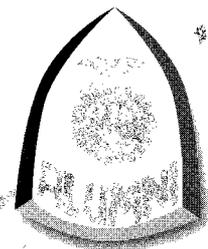


NEW VISIONS



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL FFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Volume 1, Issue 3
June/July 1996

Council Sets Priorities For Alumni Association

What's Inside...

Building Successful Programs With Advisors **3**

4 Due to a *limited* special offer, the in-depth interview with Ty England will appear in August

Strategies to Strengthen Local Recruitment—Part II **5**

7 Tips on How to Reinforce the Alumni Message

AUGUST

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

Giving Good Advice to Counselors

Motivating and Retaining Alumni Members—Part III

Alumni Conference Provides Tips for Local Leaders

Alumni Spokesperson Shares Reasons For Success

The National FFA Alumni Council met April 24-27 to plan the association's upcoming convention and participate in a visioning process. Meeting at the Georgia FFA Camp, the Council spent two days, as a continuation of a process started in 1995, refining the



Council Members

association's vision and setting priorities to accomplish goals.

Flexibility Drive Visioning Process

"In our fast-paced society, we need to be ready for change," says Dr. Ray Herren, National FFA Alumni president. "As our association grows and matures, we need to constantly reexamine our values and mission to ensure that we meet the needs of our

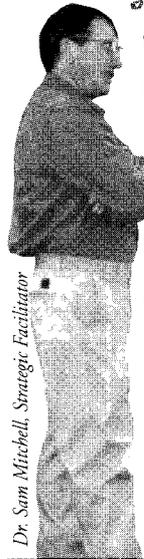
membership and provide strong support for FFA."

The sessions were facilitated by 20-year strategic planning veteran Dr. Sam Mitchell, acting director at The University of Georgia's Institute of Government. Sessions began with Council members focusing on the association's purpose, determining what members value and articulating a vision to establish a framework for specific plans to support agricultural education and FFA.

Herren says having thought through these aspects, the Council has a clearer idea

(continued on page 7)

Dr. Sam Mitchell, Strategic Facilitator



IT'S TRUE!

You have a part to play in making our students' lives better and building your community.

Make a copy of the promotional and membership form enclosed and share it with a friend. Remember, you

don't need to have been a former FFA member to join. Let's each get one new member. It only costs \$7 to join. By doing so, you can ensure that FFA and agricultural education have a support network.

To order additional copies, call the National FFA Alumni Association at 703-360-3600, ext. 293. The cost is only 10¢ a piece, plus postage and handling.

National FFA Alumni Mission

The National FFA Alumni Association secures the promise of FFA and agricultural education by creating an environment where people and communities can develop their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success.

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

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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 employee.

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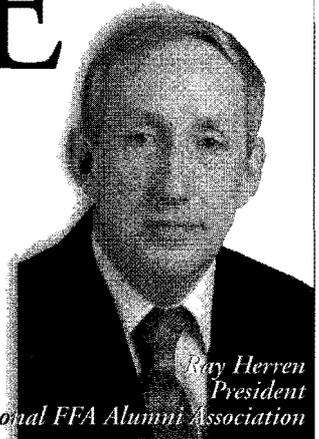
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ROUND TABLE



Ricardo L. Valencia
Executive Director
National FFA Alumni Association



Ray Herren
President
National FFA Alumni Association

Are You In The Driver's Seat

Whatever you do, no matter how routine, make something of it.

In his book, *It Was On Fire When I Lay Down On It*, Robert Fulghum quotes a driving education instructor who made something out of his job.

"I help young men and women move through a rite of passage—my job is getting them to think about this time in their lives. Having a driver's license means you move out of the backseat into the driver's seat. You aren't a passenger anymore. You're in charge. You can go where you want to go. You have the power now. So that's what we talk about. The power. Their new power, opportunity, responsibility. About dreams and hopes and fears. About 'someday' and 'what if.'"

You have a license to drive. To move the Alumni forward. You are no longer passengers, but drivers of this association and it can go anywhere you want it to go. Accept the opportunity and responsibility to grow it in your local community and your state, securing the promise of agricultural education and FFA for every young person in America. You have the power and the license to drive! 

Let's Teach What's Important

All across the country, agricultural education is changing. The new curriculum is about plant science, aquaculture and the environment. However, these areas are not the source of the program's strength.

Historically, our program has been one of public education's great success stories. The reason is that we don't teach subject matter, we teach students. Our curriculum is developed around the needs of young people in our local communities.

While technical concepts and skills are important, the essential element is teaching students to think, to problem solve, to interact socially and to communicate. Technical skills become rapidly outdated, but life skills never become obsolete.

Over the years, many shy students who lack confidence and self-esteem have benefited from the many programs offered by the FFA. Innumerable stories are recited of the leaders who directly attribute their abilities to the training received. So much so, that it is recognized today as the nation's leading youth program.

FFA needs our help and support more than ever to ensure that all of our young people have opportunity to participate in these new and exciting programs. What is important is developing our nation's greatest assets—our young people. 





ADVISOR RELATIONSHIPS KEY TO LOCAL SUCCESS

For alumni members, a working relationship with agriculture teachers and FFA advisors is vital to the success of any local program. Two agriculture teachers recently shared with *New Visions* their insights and strategies for building this most important partnership.

Q: What can alumni members do to build a relationship with local agriculture teachers?

A: Ray Gillmore, a 25-year teaching veteran from Molalla, Ore., suggests key alumni members start by meeting with local teachers. "This will give them an accurate view of teachers' expectations and clarify how they can play a positive role locally."

Gillmore, whose 70-member alumni affiliate is three years old, says member involvement needs to be structured around the fact that teachers are responsible for the program.

"This means that both sides need to have open and direct communications," adds NVATA (National Vocational Agricultural Teachers' Association) President-Elect MeeCee Baker, Ph.D.

Q: What is the key to successfully working with local agriculture teachers?

A: "The key word is 'supporter,'" explains Gillmore. "Alumni need to alleviate any fear or concern in instructors' minds that they want to 'take over.'"

Baker adds that advisory committees serve as natural places for alumni members to offer support and volunteer their time.

Q: What role can alumni play in building a local program or helping the instructor?

A: Baker, who is starting a local alumni affiliate for her Millerstown, Pa., FFA chapter, says teachers usually welcome volunteer assistance, especially in areas that add value to agricultural education programs.

Local volunteers "with experiences or related careers in horticulture have been a tremendous asset in building our greenhouse," she explains.

"It can be as simple as calling on the phone and offering help," says Baker. "However, keep in mind the tremendous time demands on local advisors."

Share an example of how you would like to get involved, offers Gillmore. "Every community is different, so assess the situation and determine how you can best make an impact."

Both offered the following ideas as ways to assist locally:

- *offer to train the chapter's teams or students for career development events or competitions;*
- *assist the local chapter with fundraising;*
- *volunteer to speak with graduates about potential careers;*
- *transport FFA members' projects to the county fair;*
- *serve as a chaperone for overnight events;*
- *encourage students to enroll in the local program or become FFA members;*
- *offer students paid or unpaid agriculture career experiences such as on farms or a landscape business.*

(continued on page 7)

NEWS you can USE



National Survey Supports Role of FFA.

According to a 1995 national survey by Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance, Americans view youth organizations such as the FFA as providing the most positive role models to young people. Of the 1,000 adults, 18 years of age and older, who were polled, 85 percent said that youth organizations were important in instilling values in young people. Also listed as providing the most positive role models: school teachers, clergy and religious leaders, doctors and police. This information can be useful when explaining to principals, superintendents and other partner groups how FFA and agricultural education provide solutions to problems and issues facing the local school and community.

FFA Opens Bids for National FFA Convention.

At its last meeting, the National FFA Board voted to explore alternative sites for the organization's convention after 1998, the last year contracted with Kansas City, Mo. FFA officials say consistent convention growth,



session overcrowding and hotel room scarcity are the reasons behind the search. FFA hired

Smith, Bucklin and Associates, Inc., a Chicago site selection firm, to solicit bids from cities interested in hosting its convention. At least three sites will be recommended to the board in July 1996. If you have any questions or would like to share your thoughts, contact Scott Stump, Convention Manager, 703-360-3600, Ext. 250 or C. Coleman Harris, National FFA Executive Secretary, 703-360-3600, Ext. 202. ☐



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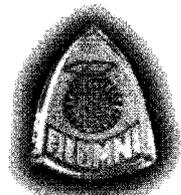
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Fostering Experiences With GATEKEEPERS

Graham Boyd daily uses his FFA training skills in working with state and national agricultural leaders. Through his interactions, he has become a walking billboard for the positive story of FFA and agricultural education. "I try to tell the FFA story every day," he says. "You never know when one person can make all the difference."

Building Bridges

"It's even more important with the trend toward more funding and authority at the local level," Boyd continues. "Alumni need to work to sustain the existence of agricultural education programs so young people can experience the benefits of FFA."

He offers the following tips:

1. *Make a presentation on agriculture's importance locally to school boards, businesses, legislators or civic groups. Use current and past FFA and alumni members to lend credibility to such talks. "Show in a practical way how local students benefit from the program," Boyd adds.*
2. *Make an effort to obtain local news coverage at least once a month for a variety of students.*
3. *Work hard to include legislators and state education leaders in your convention or hold an "FFA Day" at the state legislature.*
4. *Invite key partner groups to Kansas City to see "local" members achieve success.*

"Backgrounding needs to be done early," Boyd suggests. "We need to anticipate possible budget cuts, especially since the general public equates a shrinking number of farm producers with a decline in agriculture." ▮

Photo at right: (from left to right) North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt, Deere & Co. Chief Executive Officer Hans Becherer and Boyd share a moment at the "Governor's Summit on Agriculture." Mr. Becherer is an agricultural leader with whom Boyd shares the FFA story.

of



Local Needs Key to Recruitment Efforts



Successful recruiters are those that *focus* so specifically on local tasks that only qualified volunteers come forward, says Susan Ellis, author of *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*. To her, this approach will ensure that local affiliates recruit the type of people needed for the association to survive. It will create less work for you as a recruiter.

"Instead of a cast-the-net campaign," she explains, "you become a diagnostician, creating satisfied members and meeting agricultural education's long-term needs."

Analyzing Needs, Setting Objectives

To start, avoid asking questions such as "Who do *we know* who can do this?" Rather, seek out people you don't already know!

Identify your local agricultural education program, FFA chapter and community needs. Sit down with the agriculture teacher and list all types of projects, including your "wish lists." While it's not a guarantee you'll find volunteers to do the work, this process will provide a strategy for recruiting the types of volunteers able to handle those tasks. Start by asking these four questions:

- *What are we currently doing that we want to do more of?*
- *What unmet needs do the local program and FFA chapter have that we presently can do nothing*

about?

- *What would support agriculture teachers or advisors in their work?*
- *What might we do differently if we had more skills and time available to us?*

Be Realistic

Knowing what you expect of members can serve as a foundation in recruiting presentations. "A good way to attract members is to be specific and up-front about the commitment," Ellis adds. "Though members pay dues, they are more apt to say yes if you give them real and challenging work to do."

As prospects consider membership, they will want to know what you are offering them in exchange for their time and dues. "As you develop member job

"Make joining a status symbol besides what's in it for members," she suggests.

Checking Your Efforts

If you have difficulties recruiting prospects or keeping current members, Ellis suggests conducting a focus group with 10 people who have said "no" to membership recently. You can do the same if most non-members are recent high school graduates.

"It may be wrong timing or just that recent grads view membership at age 20 as continuing their high school experience," she predicts.

Some key questions you may want to ask:

- *Why don't you want to be active members?*
- *What would make alumni more appealing to you?*
- *What specific concerns do you have about joining?*

"Instead of a cast-the-net campaign," she explains, "you become a diagnostician, creating satisfied members and meeting agricultural education's long-term needs."

descriptions, articulate what the benefits are for each assignment or task," she explains. "Use this information to explain what they can expect to receive."

Benefits can be tangible such as the *New Visions* newsletter or discount auto rentals. Or intangible such as:

- *An up-to-date understanding of agricultural education, FFA and agriculture.*
- *Training for a specific skill.*
- *New friends.*

"Once you have answers you can either adjust your approach to explain the benefits better or improve what they want," she explains. "If there is such a large age gap in membership, you may need to develop projects that specifically appeal to recent grads. Chances are they will eventually join once common ground is established." ❑

Editor's Note: The final segment in this three-part series on recruitment will focus on motivating and retaining local alumni members.

Part II



Susan Ellis, author of *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*

Building Partnerships

ADVISOR RELATIONSHIPS KEY TO LOCAL SUCCESS

(continued from page 3)

"My alumni has been the best thing that happened in my 25 years of teaching!"

—Ray Gillmore, agriculture teacher

Q: What other ways can alumni help out?

A: Besides direct instructional assistance, alumni volunteers can be key in reopening a closed agricultural education program as was the case in Millerstown, says Baker. Since that time, the program has grown to 85 students, one third of the school's enrollment. "Local residents who are organized are

in a better position to assist teachers."

Gillmore adds that local alumni have been responsible for preserving his advisor's stipend and increasing his extended contract to 40 extra days despite severe school district budget cuts. **M**

Alumni Cruise Offers Sun, Fun and Friendship!

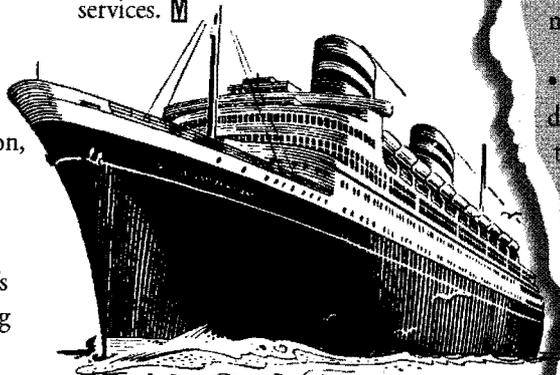


Picture yourself enjoying the tropical sun and a fresh sea breeze. Sound inviting? Mark your calendars now for the first-ever National FFA Alumni cruise scheduled for early next year.

Cruise Bargains Available

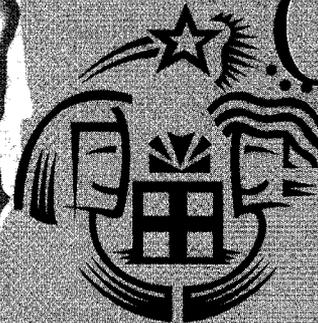
Cruise fares start at \$836.60 per person, double occupancy, and include all meals, cabin, entertainment and port taxes—everything you need for this seven-day journey. Low-cost air fares from passenger's home cities are available at time of booking

through World's Window Travel (WWT). Norwegian Cruise Lines and WWT are offering an early bird special for those passengers who book by Aug. 15. The special consists of \$100 off the cabin cruise fare and a \$50 credit for on-board services. **M**



For more information on how to take advantage of this voyage, contact Jackie Dungan of World's Window Travel, 800-998-2388.

HERE'S ONE FOR YOU



Crafting Messages That Work For You

According to Harvard University research, the average sound bite lasts 7.3 seconds. That means your interview messages must have punch and convey your purpose instantly. Some steps to use in preparing your messages:

- 1. Analyze your audience.** What do they need to know? What issues or concerns do they have? How will you get them to listen to you?
- 2. Highlight mutual benefits.** Think about their interests and values. If the audience is parents, they will be interested in their students' scholastic achievement or providing positive role models.
- 3. Brainstorm all possible messages.** Your most persuasive messages will address those interests, concerns and issues.
- 4. Choose the best messages.** Craft the language that fits you and your situation.
 - Start with a statement that summarizes your conclusion. For example: "The FFA Alumni supports the FFA, which provides positive role models for today's youth."
 - Next, support your introductory statement with data, statistics or factual information. Proceed with this: "A national survey suggests that 85 percent of Americans view youth organizations such as the FFA as providing the most positive role models."
 - End with a personal example or anecdote. You could say, "Our alumni sponsors FFA members to attend the national convention, where they gain incentive by seeing how other students plan and accomplish their goals." **M**



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COUNCIL SETS PRIORITIES FOR ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

(Continued from page 1)

of where the alumni association needs to go and how to get there. "Our mission statement does a better job now of defining what we are all about," he says. "Definite plans can now be made to increase and provide additional benefits for the membership."

The National FFA Alumni Association developed this vision, mission and value statements to create a shared vision among the membership:

We believe in a world where people and communities can grow and develop to their fullest potential.

Our mission is to secure the promise of FFA and agricultural education by creating an environment where people and communi-

ties can develop their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success.

We value:

- The integral nature of FFA and agricultural education.
- Agriculture as an essential part of society.
- Diversity in serving all populations.
- The development of the whole person.
- The impact of a teacher on a student's life.
- The impact and involvement of parents/guardians and communities on a student's life.
- The community's support of agricultural education teachers and programs.

Correction

The Clinton FFA Alumni affiliate is located in Clinton, Wis. Besides national winner Milton, Wis., Clinton was the only other gold award winning affiliate in the Outstanding Affiliate Award program from Wisconsin. In the convention recap article, Feb./March 1996, Clinton was incorrectly listed as being from nearby Janesville, Wis.

CALENDAR

JULY thru NOVEMBER



July 22-28

FFA Alumni State Leaders' Conference—Alexandria, Va.

September 1

Outstanding Affiliate Award Applications Due

October 1

National FFA Alumni Convention Delegates Registrations Due

Legion of Merit Citation Applications Due

November

15-16

National FFA Alumni Association Convention—Kansas City, Mo.

