

NEW VISIONS



THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL FFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Volume 1, Issue 6
December/January 1997

CONVENTION PARTICIPANTS Remember Past, Celebrate Future

More than 1,500 participants at this year's National FFA Alumni Convention applauded 25 years of support of FFA. Besides recognizing past National FFA Alumni presidents for their contributions, the association held a gala 25th anniversary celebration at the convention's close on Saturday evening.

Participants also witnessed a new direction for the association, which presented a newer look and feel at all its Friday and Saturday convention sessions and in its conference publications. Alumni member Larry Swetnam, Lexington, Ky., says he felt a "breath of newness and growth" at this year's convention—a real desire to include everyone and their ideas in support of FFA youth.

Association Celebrates Growth

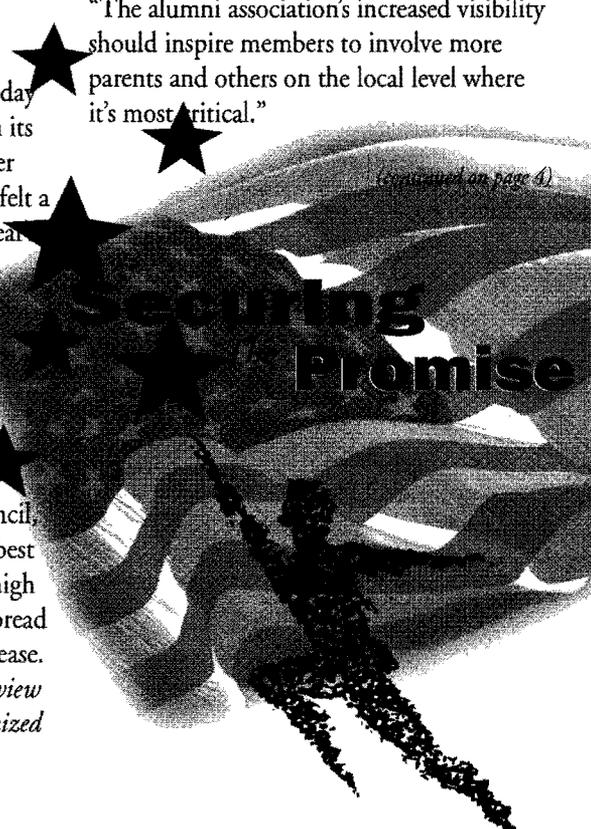
Under the leadership of Ray Herren, National FFA Alumni president and the 11-member National FFA Alumni Council, participants celebrated the association's best ever membership year with an all-time high of 43,746 members. Growth was widespread with 38 states seeing a membership increase. (See "Award Snapshots" on page four to review the individuals, affiliates and states recognized for their contributions to this success.)

Theme Focuses on Future

Friday's opening session debuted the convention theme, "Securing the Promise." The theme represented the association's mission to build "an educated grassroots network across the country to support the greatest student organization in the world," explains Ricardo Valencia, executive director.

Swetnam also says the convention affirmed to him FFA youth are a tremendous resource. "We are in the infancy of building a fantastic support organization," he says. "The alumni association's increased visibility should inspire members to involve more parents and others on the local level where it's most critical."

(Continued on page 4)



What's Inside...

1	2	3
4	5	6

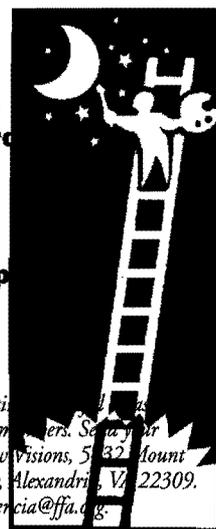
COMING UP IN FEBRUARY

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

Building Success With School Board Members

Finding Creative Activities to Support FFA Members

We need your help in collecting ideas for activities that support FFA members. Send your suggestions and ideas to *New Visions*, 5332 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309. Or e-mail it to ricardo_valencia@ffa.org.



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.

The official address for the National FFA Alumni Association is P.O. Box 15058, Alexandria, VA 22309; 703-360-3600, Ext. 293.

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.

Publication Staff

Ricardo L. Valencia
Executive Editor

Gary A. Staszak
Managing Editor

James D. Waller

Associate Editor/Advertising Manager

Cindy Dix

Art Director

Kimberly Rigol

Editorial Assistant

National FFA Alumni Council

President, Shirley Carter, Florida

Vice President, Linda Story, Kentucky

Past President, Dr. Ray V. Herren, Georgia

Western Region Representative,
Monte Womack, Oklahoma

Central Region Representative, R.D. Johnson, Illinois

Eastern Region Representative, James Shiflet, Virginia

Southern Region Representative, Gene Vail, Arizona

AAAE Representative, Dr. Walter N. Taylor, Mississippi

NVATA Representative, Gene Starr, Florida

Past National FFA Officer, Andy McCall, Texas

Member-At-Large, Barry Anderson, Nebraska

NASAE Representative, Lee Griffith, Arkansas

National FFA Representative, Ashley Edwards, Kansas

Ex-Officio Members:

National FFA Advisor, Dr. Larry Case

Executive Director, Ricardo L. Valencia

National FFA Alumni Staff

Executive Director, Ricardo L. Valencia

Executive Assistant, Kimberly Rigol

Membership Specialist, Connie Tyler

Marketing Consultants, James D. Waller and

Ford Thompson

Financial Consultant, Carl M. Trevisan

CORRESPONDENCE: Address all correspondence to Ricardo Valencia, executive editor, FFA Alumni *New Visions*, P.O. Box 15058, Alexandria, Virginia 22309-0058, or e-mail: ricardo.valencia@ffa.org.

ADDRESS CHANGES: Please send change of address, including label changes, to Melinda Linn-French, editorial assistant, at the address listed below. Third class postage rate is paid at Alexandria, VA, and additional offices.

PETRA COMMUNICATIONS: Editorial and Production Consultant

CW DESIGN: Design and Production Consultant

© Copyright 1997 by the National FFA Alumni Association.



Ricardo L. Valencia
Executive Director,
National FFA Alumni Association

ROUND TABLE

LEADERSHIP IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

ServiceMaster Company Chairman C. William Pollard said the following regarding leadership in a time of change, "Will the leader please stand up? Not the president, or the person with the most distinguished title, but the *role model*. Not the highest-paid person in the group, but the *risk-taker*. Not the person with the largest car or the biggest home, but the *servant*. Not the person who promotes himself or herself but the *promoter of others*. Not the administrator, but the *initiator*. Not the taker, but the *giver*. Not the talker, but the *listener*."

Today, we live in a world of accelerated change and choice, dislocation and discontinuity. While there is more freedom and choice, there is definitely more confusion. The only thing certain about tomorrow is that it will be different from today. And tomorrow's challenges require that its leaders be "servant leaders."

Many of us will reflect on 1996 as a year of change. Many changes are of historic proportions and will ensure the long-term existence of FFA. Two of the most significant changes occurred when the National FFA Organization voted to move its national convention to Louisville, Ky., beginning in 1999 and relocate its business offices to Indianapolis.

Your Alumni association realized some changes as well. It re-imaged itself with a new and progressive look. It introduced the *NEW VISIONS* newsletter and named

RCA Recording Artist Ty England as it's first national spokesperson.

Our convention saw positive change as well. We celebrated our 25th anniversary with a new and impactful presence in Kansas City. The convention moved to a weekend conference and a larger venue with increased attendance and visibility.

Significant changes were made in the association's constitution and operating policies: the membership year, national officer elections, life membership memorial scholarships and pro-rated life. These changes in how your association operates will have a positive impact in the years ahead.

Amid all of this transition, it's important to know that these changes have been made by the association's servant leaders. The changes over this past year have been made on your behalf and for your benefit. You who are the role models, the risk-takers, the initiators, the givers and listeners and most importantly the promoters, supporters and servants of the greatest youth organization in the world-the FFA.

It is my wish for each of you that these changes be embraced and that you continue the servant leadership during this next year. Happy New Year! 



Recruiting Parents to the FFA Dream Team

FFA alumni can build a strong link between parents and local agriculture programs. Involved parents provide leadership, career mentoring and role models, says Denmark, Wis., agriculture teacher Ken Seering. "With more parents on the team, a program has more manpower and students have more opportunities," he adds.

Securing parental involvement has its challenges. Despite the hurdles, the Denmark FFA Alumni has one of the nation's largest memberships and strongest parental support networks.

Support Starts at Home

Most parents want their children to become caring adults and good citizens, says Denmark membership chairperson Marilyn Madsen. "FFA youth are doing positive things for society," she adds. "That's a natural selling point."

For other parents, she stresses the need to be involved in their children's education, which is one reason she joined in 1976.

Examples Build Future Legacy

"Seeing us involved gets them involved," explains alumni president elect Kathy Rentmeester of her children. Though not an active member, Rentmeester's daughter volunteers her time because she sees her mother and father support the local chapter and what FFA does for her friends.

Tips to Increase Parental Involvement

1. Encourage FFA members to talk to parents. Explain how agricultural education and FFA build skills for life and work.
2. Keep them informed. Send parents a regular newsletter, highlighting specific examples of support and ideas for involvement.
3. Invite parents to participate in FFA activities. Many tasks require very little time commitment. Many volunteers mean a low burnout ratio. In Denmark, parents are invited to participate as soon as their children enroll in agricultural education.
4. Hold social gatherings to show appreciation. Host a corn roast, steak and shrimp dinner and appreciation night where parents are recognized for their support. "Having fun draws people out," Madsen says.
5. Recruit graduating seniors. Involve graduates early before they become parents and there is less time in their schedules.
6. Contact parents in person. "Parents are more apt to respond after

(continued on page 7)

N
you can SE

...d in
...al
...Bonsville,
...ven-year
...Car and
...month
...are the
...FFA to
...for its
...an arena that
...sufficient and
...close to the conven-
...and adequate facilities for conven-
...tion activities

(Continued from Page 12)

Securing The Promise

AWARD SNAPSHOTS

On Friday and Saturday, the National FFA Alumni Association recognized the contributions of members, local affiliates and others who have helped to secure the promise of agricultural education and FFA.

Outstanding Achievement Award

The association's highest honor for leadership and service to agricultural education and FFA

- Josiah Phelps, Fort Valley, Georgia
- June Dean, Owasso, Oklahoma
- Donald Noack, Denmark, Wisconsin

Outstanding Affiliate Award

An award for an outstanding program of activities in support of local FFA chapters

- National Winner—
Leroy, Illinois
- Runner-up—
Milton, Wisconsin

Earning gold awards for their efforts are these affiliates:

- Illinois:** Leroy
- Kansas:** Hill City, Washington
- Wisconsin:** Clinton, Denmark, Granton, Mauston, Milton

MEMBERSHIP AWARDS

Blue Blazer Award

Award given to states which increased membership by at least 100 members

- Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, Oregon, Wisconsin

State With Most Life Members and Life Affiliates

Wisconsin

Affiliate With Most Life Members

Denmark, Wisconsin

State With Most and Largest Increase in Alumni Members

Wisconsin

Largest Percentage Membership Growth

Arizona

Largest Affiliate Award

Turner Ashby, Virginia

Highest Percentage of FFA Membership

- Wisconsin
- Montana
- Oklahoma
- Connecticut

Scrapbook Gold Award Recipients

Wisconsin: Black Hawk, Janesville, New Holstein

Members Challenged to Build Support

The highlight of the opening session was keynote speaker Rudy Ruettiger whose life was the inspiration for the motion picture "Rudy." Ruettiger's struggle to play football for Notre Dame University

served as the springboard for his message of striving to achieve dreams in supporting today's youth.

"To achieve your dreams, you will have to struggle," he told alumni members. "You must have courage to move through it and not listen to those who try to take away your dreams."

Members Debate Future Direction

Alumni members discussed seven proposed constitutional amendments at Friday's business session. But, the one topic that caused the most debate involved raising life membership dues to \$500. Representatives from states with smaller membership protested that an increase would mean a decline in

new life members. Others agreed with one delegate who felt it was "unfair that the organization we're supposed to support has been subsidizing us." In the end, the measure failed. (For

highlights from the business session, see "Here's One For You," page seven.)

Delegates elected Nebraska's Barry Anderson as new Member-At-Large. Anderson is currently president of the Nebraska FFA Alumni Association and a crop science specialist with Farmland Industries. He joined newly-elected president Shirley Carte of Live Oak, Fla., and vice president Linda Story of Owensboro, Ky., on the 1997 National FFA Alumni Council. Additionally, Andy McCall was named past national FFA officer representative to the council for the next year.

Auctions Provide Excitement and New Format

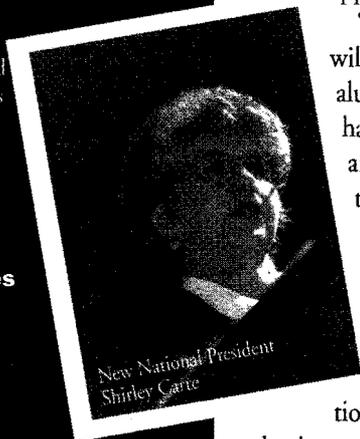
A new addition to the alumni convention was a silent auction. It was held in conjunction with the annual live auction. It featured vacation getaways, including a Puerto Rican trip valued at \$1,000, motivational presentations and dozens of priceless items signed by country music stars such as a guitar autographed by Garth Brooks and one from Ty England, which sold for \$2,400. In all, the silent auction raised \$9,392.

The regular live auction, held Friday night, raised \$42,102 to support FFA programs. Bidders purchased items such as limited-edition shotguns, rifles and revolvers, a tool chest and cabinet from Carquest and a greenhouse donated by Hummert International. The evening's big item was a customized 1997 Chevy Silverado 4x4, which sold for \$20,700. All items were donated by businesses, individuals and FFA alumni. ■

This article was written with information from several sources including the 69th National FFA Convention Proceedings.



The National FFA Alumni Association honored Josiah Phelps (left), Donald Noack and June "Grandma" Dean with the Outstanding Achievement Award for their years of dedicated service to FFA and alumni.



New National President Shirley Carte



Passing of the Gavel: Past President Dr. Ray Herren (right) of Georgia congratulates Shirley Carte of Florida on being named the new national alumni president.



Help Community Members See the Potential

Aaron Vaughn is on a one-man crusade to inform everyone of what agricultural education and FFA can do for today's youth. "By being in the alumni, I hope to help people who need a change in their lives and show them how FFA and alumni can help," he says. Vaughn offers these tips on how to involve community members or students looking for a place to turn:

- 1. Share the message.** Hold more local events such as barbecues or an open house where you can invite key community members and demonstrate to them about how agricultural education and FFA make a difference. Encourage local students and FFA members to share their positive experiences with their parents. These people can become your greatest advocates.
- 2. Recruit key leaders.** Spread the work load around by recruiting community leaders such as those who belong to the Kiwanis or other area civic groups. Community leaders lend credibility to your efforts and are an effective means of advertising the program's positive results.
- 3. Use personal experiences and examples to relay the message.** "People know that I'm living proof that FFA makes a difference in students' lives," Vaughn explains. "The change students or parents see in me builds respect and they want to learn more about how I did it." ▣



POINTS LIGHT

Florida Youth Finds Himself Through FFA

For Aaron Vaughn, his future is intimately tied to his FFA past. Like other youth in today's turbulent society, Vaughn, Jasper, Fla., found "life his freshman year completely unfocused." It was FFA and a caring teacher that helped him find himself again.

A Road to Nowhere

"I was ruining my life, lonely with very few friends," he says. "As a cry for help, I turned to alcohol and ran with a bad crowd."

Vaughn lost his job. Family tensions escalated, while his single mother tried to give him good advice. He recalls that he "wanted to change, but couldn't."

Local Teacher, Program Provide Outlet

Agriculture teacher Gene Starr befriended Vaughn his junior year at Hamilton County High School. It was during FFA activities caught Vaughn's eye. Through FFA fundraisers and livestock shows, Starr taught Vaughn and other students about teamwork, goal setting and discovering their hidden talents.

"It was a life transformation," Vaughn recalls. "I never knew what I could do. I had to face my problems and not run away."

Instead of joining the Marine Corps, Vaughn worked as a grocery store produce and dairy manager as a part of his experience project. During his senior year at Florida FFA

selected him as the Area FFA representative.

"I'm Vaughn now. I'm FFA, I'm now. I'm now."

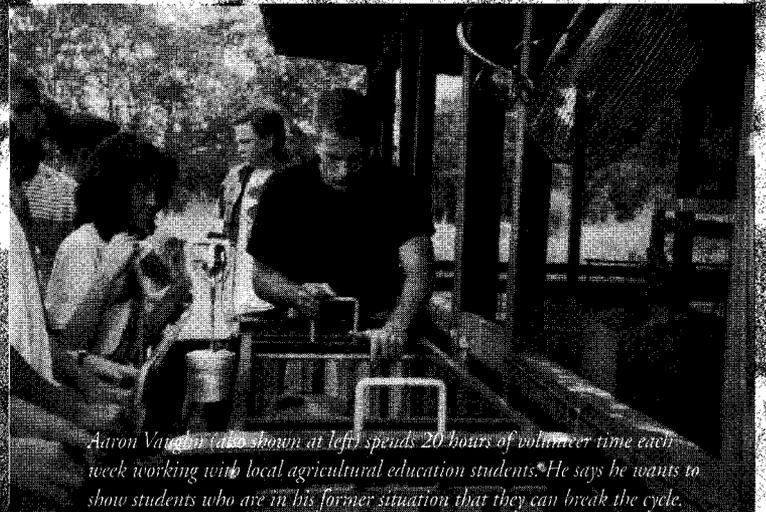
Starr says, "He wanted to have the opportunity to act rather than being

Promising Future Lies Ahead

Since graduating from high school in June 1996, Vaughn started a lawn care business where he works 10 hours a week. Despite his busy schedule, he currently attends North Florida Community College and is majoring in agriculture.

He assists Starr each week with his gathering ideas from his college biology class. The Hamilton County FFA chapter is a forum to make instruction more relevant for students.

"When Aaron comes into the classroom, there's respect and students find hope in his example," Starr says. ▣



Aaron Vaughn (also shown at left) spends 20 hours of volunteer time each week working with local agricultural education students. He says he wants to show students who are in his former situation that they can break the cycle.



Local Affiliate *Corrals Funds* to Support FFA

Seven years ago, Gonzalez, Fla., parents and promoters established an alumni affiliate to financially support the local J.W. Tate FFA Chapter. They knew it would require hard work, but never expected their efforts to be so successful, says John Kelley, 30-year teacher and agriculture department chairperson.

Members set an original goal of raising \$100,000 in 10 years to serve as a financial base to support chapter activities.

Slow Start, Big Ideas

It was obvious from the beginning that a successful fundraiser was needed if the

\$100,000 goal was to become a reality. An alumni member suggested that a rodeo would be a good undertaking. With reluctance on the part of many, the first Tate FFA Alumni Rodeo was scheduled for April 1992.

Community Partnering Is Key

It was decided to sell \$25, \$50 and \$100 advertisements. Fortunately for the Tate FFA Alumni, the membership included a prominent, successful businessman. He immediately advised the association, "not to undersell ourselves, we can do much better."

His advice was to design sponsorship packages of differing levels. Bronze (\$250), silver (\$500) and gold (\$750) and super gold (\$1,000) were established. He offered the use of his public relations/advertising staff to develop these sponsorship packages. He also bought the first super gold sponsorship. His expert advice and assistance combined with the members' enthusiasm and determination helped the Tate FFA Alumni Association onto the road to success. The results were phenomenal.

The first year profits were a little more than \$7,000. In 1996, the profits totaled more than \$30,000. There were 12 gold sponsors (\$1,000) and more than 125 bronze and silver sponsorships.

Alumni and FFA members parked cars and managed concessions to increase revenue intake.

Leaving a Legacy

Now a little more than five year later, they have met their goal of \$100,000. To safeguard funds raised and provide continued support, the alumni affiliate created a local, tax-exempt foundation. Funds are continually deposited into certificates and treasury bonds. Strict rules of incorporation prevent use of funds without authorization by the foundation's board of directors.

Students Enjoy the Rewards

The interest on the principal subsidizes the local agricultural education department budget and defrays travel and hotel expenses to state competitive events such as judging contests as well as the state and national conventions. A committee was formed to provide scholarships for outstanding Tate High School agriculture students.

Fundraising Tips:

1. Establish clear goals. What do you want to do with the funds? How much money do you need?
2. Build a level of trust. Agriculture teacher John Kelley says that a key to fundraising is developing a well-documented system that keeps careful records and builds an audit trail. And, he advises recruiting respectable community members who can speak credibly on behalf of local alumni boards of directors and financial committees.
3. Find people who can do the job for you. Assign members to accomplish specific tasks.
4. Create a sense of vision and work together. Remind members regularly of how the funds will be used. This will help to create shared vision and inspire them to work harder to accomplish agreed upon financial goals. ■



TATE
FFA
ALUMNI
RODEO



Building Partnerships: Recruiting Parents to the FFA Dream Team (Continued from Page 3)

personal contact," Madsen adds. "We have a core group of members who keep in touch with volunteers."

7. Refer to acquaintances. Rentmeester and her husband, Glenn, speak of mutual friends who are current members as a bridge to membership.
8. Build ownership through publicity. Denmark FFA and alumni members submit weekly articles on activities to the local newspaper. They regularly give status reports to the school board. Each year a 40-page supplement appears in the newspaper featuring award winners, degree recipients and other positive examples of what the program is doing. "We have a lot of support because we tell our story and the community knows our program," Seering says. ▣

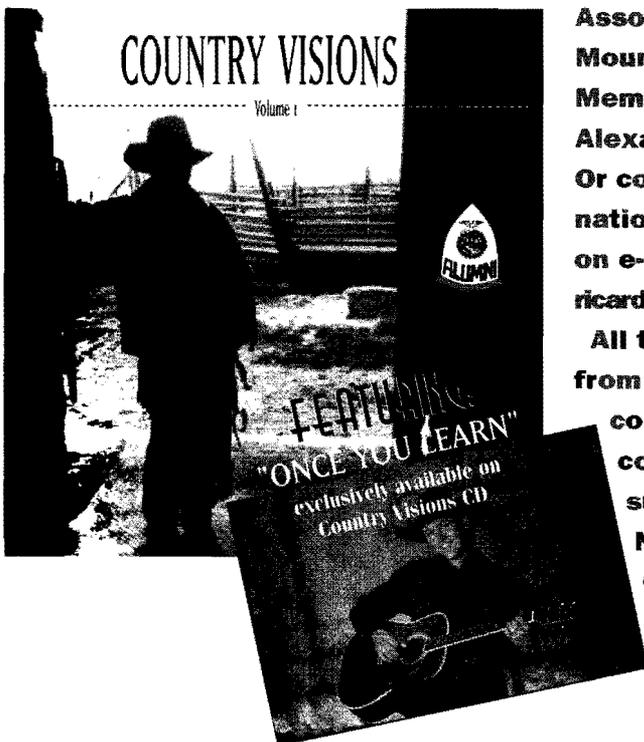
Alumni and FFA Fundraising OPPORTUNITY

The National FFA Alumni Association is making an exciting *Country Visions* compact disc fundraising project available to all FFA chapter and alumni affiliates across the United States. Sales began Dec. 1, 1996, and will conclude March 15, 1997. Each chapter and affiliate can earn \$2.50 for each compact disc sold, plus other prizes are available.

For more information, contact your local agricultural education teacher or write *Country Visions* CD Fundraiser,

National FFA Alumni Association, 5632 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Alexandria, VA 22309. Or contact the national alumni office on e-mail: ricardo_valencia@ffa.org.

All the proceeds from the sale of this collection will go to continue building support for the National FFA Organization and this contribution is NOT tax deductible. ▣



HERE'S ONE FOR YOU

Delegates Approve Amendments, Council Revises Membership Policies

At November's National FFA Annual convention, delegates passed all proposed amendments, except the one to raise the membership dues to a \$500 one-time fee. Here are two important highlights.

The National FFA Alumni Association vice-president will be elected by the delegates. These changes will take effect at the 1997 National FFA Alumni Convention, held in November.

The annual membership year will begin Sept. 1 and end Aug. 31. State and chapter members will receive information shortly. These changes will affect membership awards.

Here are some important highlights from a recent National FFA Alumni Council meeting:

Memorial scholarships will no longer be admitted on life membership status after Jan. 1, 1997.

Funds from these scholarships will be held for investment purposes. The National FFA Alumni Association will continue to award additional scholarships to chapters activated prior to 1997.

Partial life memberships will be discontinued. After Jan. 1, 1997, memberships will consist only of a base fee of \$150. This policy change will affect members currently on a partial life membership plan.

Local dues notices will be issued from the National FFA Alumni office. Due to restructuring of membership policies, the national office will provide this service to members. ▣

Questions and comments can be sent to Ricardo L. Valencia, National FFA Alumni executive director, at 703-360-3600 or on e-mail: ricardo_valencia@ffa.org.

NEW VISIONS



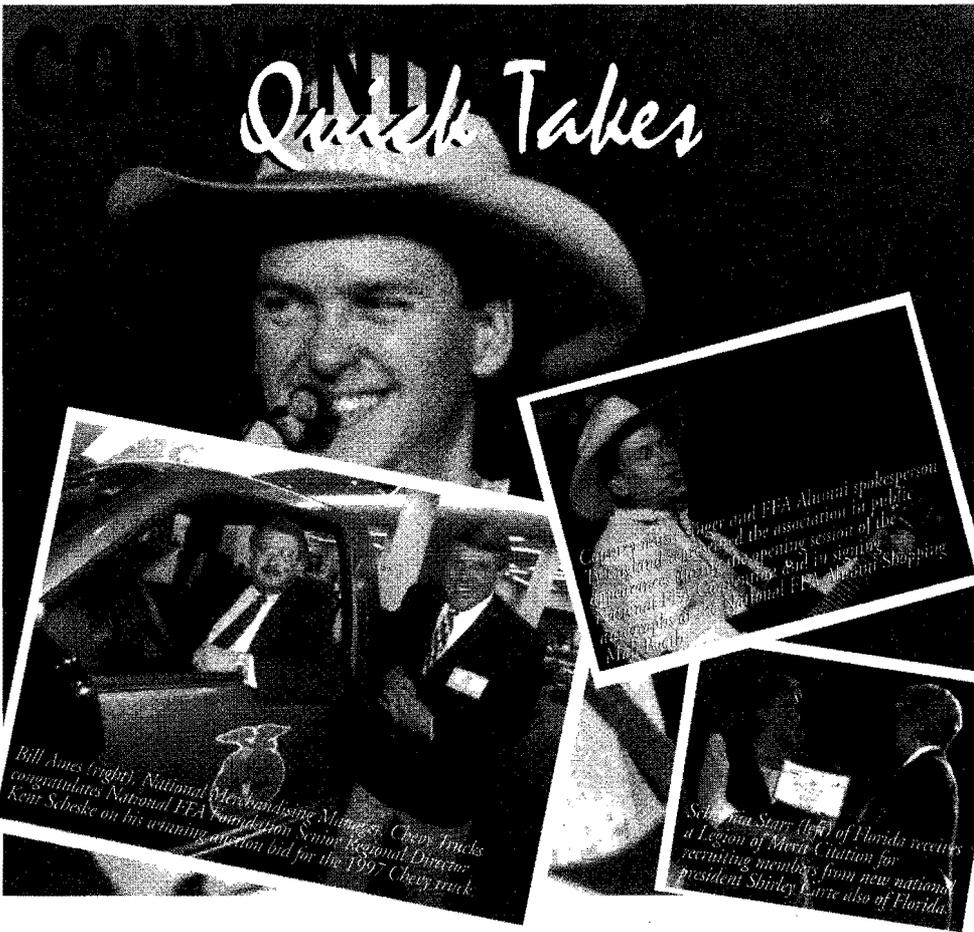
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL FFA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 1080
DAYTON, OH

Newsletter

National FFA Alumni Association
Future Farmers of America
5632 Mt. Vernon Memorial Hwy
Alexandria, VA 22309

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Bill Aines (right), National Merchandising Manager, Chevy Trucks congratulates National FFA Foundation Senior Regional Director Keith Scheke on his winning audition bid for the 1997 Chevy truck.

... and FFA Alumni spokespersons at the association's public opening session of the National FFA Alumni Shopping

Shirley Starr (left) of Florida receives a Legion of Merit Citation for recruiting members from new national president Shirley Korte also of Florida.

CALENDAR

DECEMBER *thru* FEBRUARY



Dec. 1, 1996-March 15, 1997
FFA Alumni's Country Visions CD
National Fundraising Event

Jan. 26-29, 1997
FFA Board of Directors and
Board of Trustees Meeting-
Alexandria, VA

Jan. 29-Feb. 2, 1997
FFA Alumni Council Meeting-
Alexandria, VA

Feb. 17-21, 1997
National FFA Week