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Building Partnerships: How to Make Partners Out of Other Teachers Who May be Competing for Students Too

By Deb Buehler

A slice of homemade pie in hand, Artesia High School teachers gather once a year to learn more about agriculture classes and the Artesia High School FFA Chapter. The event – called “Pie Supper,” has become a well-attended standing tradition.

“Students earn extra credit by contributing homemade pies,” said Monte Avery an agriculture teacher in the southeastern New Mexico school. “From 3:30 to 5:30 all of the teachers, faculty and staff are invited to come to our building for pie. They tour our modern facility; see the halls lined with plaques and awards and meet students by participating in small judging competitions. The teacher who does the best wins a roll of sausage from our own program.”

Avery believes that agriculture teachers really have to make an active choice to build relationships with teachers outside their discipline. Because agriculture students are often needed for time outside other classes, a quality relationship with colleagues is essential.

Intentionally Build Relationships

“Do something for other educators,” Avery suggests. “Host a faculty breakfast during FFA Week – it’s the perfect opportunity to let teachers know what’s going on. There isn’t a subject that other teachers are teaching that doesn’t tie in.”

Jim Pomeroy, Director of the Agricultural Science and Technology Center at E.O. Smith School in Storrs, Conn., keeps a steady smile on his face as he works with teachers from other disciplines.

Comprehensive high schools in Connecticut are structured so that educators work together aligned with the goals and

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aspirations of students.

“We work collaboratively here,” Pomeroy said. “We value what each other do and raise the bar for academic rigor and relevance. We make sure as teachers that we value relationships.”

Being an administrator for his department has taught Pomeroy to be a good listener, be concrete and sequential in decision making and to respect what others do. He and his department put a lot of emphasis on career development events that incorporate other disciplines.

“We can only be as much a professional in our area as we can,” Pomeroy suggests. “Elicit help outside the walls of your classroom, be visible in the hall way, be seen in the office and come in on weekends or snow days when others are in.”

Pomeroy notes that it can be challenging to find a balance between being really visible and making more work for yourself. For example, it can be a great experience for students with supervised agricultural experience projects to be hired for landscaping. It shouldn't be thrust upon them though, as an expectation; the agriculture department shouldn't become solely responsible for school landscaping.

Seeking Other Educators

Both Pomeroy and Avery have sought educators from other disciplines. When Pomeroy was working on farm business management content, he collaborated with the math department. English teachers have been involved in presentations, projects and reading student manuscripts.

“Whatever we are doing, we make sure that we present ourselves as a resource to other departments,” Pomeroy said.

“Get to know other teachers in your district,” Avery adds. “I've coached parliamentary teams for the business department because our students overlap.”

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Ag Teachers and Administrators: A Match Made in Heaven?

By Beth A. DeHoff

Sometimes, the only thing standing between an agriculture teacher and his goals for a new program for his students, or a new fundraiser or other initiative, can seem to be the school's administration. Just get the thing approved, and you're all set, you think.

Honestly, says Ray Nash, a 14-year agriculture teacher who has spent the last 12 years at Biggersville High School in northeast Mississippi, looking at your administration as an obstacle is counterproductive. The best way to advance your agriculture program and your students' education, he says, is to make your administration your students' biggest fans.

"Go in and sit down with them – be upfront about your expectations and what the administrator expects, and find a common ground amid those expectations," Nash says. "If everyone is on the same road going the same direction, that will help everyone with accomplishing shared goals."

Nash enjoys a good working relationship with his principal and other administrative personnel. "My principal is familiar with our calendar of events and my lesson plans, and he knows what's going on. And we help each other," he says. "If he needs me to handle a small project or needs help getting something fixed, our kids and I are there to help. When it comes time for us to ask permission for a fundraising event or something like that, he already knows us. That makes it easy."

Bruce Silva has been superintendent for Regional School District 19 in Connecticut, and he's never been in an agriculture program – it wasn't offered in his high school when he was growing up. Yet his district's high school is an agricultural center in the state, taking students from around the area who want to study agriculture and related fields. His agriculture teachers have made a real effort to involve

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Silva and other administrators in their program, and now this superintendent has served on Connecticut's State Ag Consulting Committee for the past five years. He is clearly one of his agriculture program's most ardent advocates.

"Our staff has worked very hard to involve their administrators in their events and activities," Silva says. "It's always a very welcoming place to go." The agriculture teachers and students hold an annual open house, inviting the school community in for activities, food and education about the program. They also enlist the help of administrators to be judges and help in other roles for class and chapter activities. Every year for Board of Education month, the agriculture program's floral department makes beautiful floral arrangements, and FFA members present them to each board member at that month's school board meeting.

"Try to get your administrator to feel it's their program," Silva advises. "Whenever there are events and opportunities to involve them and let them get to know your program and your students, do that. Involve your administrators in your program's successes. As a superintendent, I can feel good because I feel I'm showcasing our students' successes. Then when they need something special, I'm much more inclined to support the program, because they do some nice PR and make us all look good."

Nash notes that in addition to involving administrators, he tries to show the many educational benefits of agricultural programs. "If a teacher can express the educational value of agricultural education and how it contributes to overall school success, that goes a long way in showing our value," he says.

Silva concurs. "What appeals to me the most is it's such a wonderful opportunity for kids to become really excited about learning," he says. "There's plenty of academic learning in ag classes, but there's also very authentic hands-on learning opportunities. The leadership part of FFA is great, and kids benefit from the competitive events and public speaking." Having a teacher and advisor show him these things through getting him involved, Silva says, was key. "When I saw all that, I loved it. Some kids need something different, and if books and pencils don't engage them, then this will. I've been thrilled to have this in our school."

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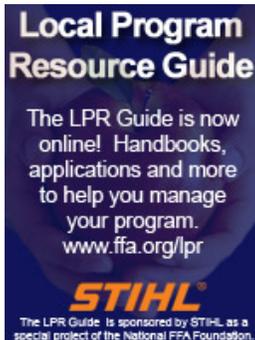
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Creating a Local Team Ag Ed

By Nicole Keller

Lately, it seems everyone is forming a team of supporters, governments and industries. Why not form your own team for agricultural education? Teachers who build their own Team Ag Eds, or TAEs, can benefit from bringing “everyone to the table who is a partner in your local program,” according to Ernie Gill, FFA Local Program Success (LPS) specialist for the western states.

The TAE concept has been filtering from the national to state and local levels over the last several years. FFA and partner organizations decided to work together to promote communication. But some schools have not yet developed their team or use existing groups double-duty. “The problem is that existing boards or alumni chapters don’t encompass the full scope of community resources available and aren’t inclusive enough so teachers aren’t getting the full benefit,” Gill said. “Maybe you just have business and industry but no representatives from alumni or the foundation.” The key is to bring everyone together and to develop a common base of knowledge about what is happening in the agricultural education program.

TAEs, chapter advisory boards and alumni affiliates—though all supporting students—play different roles. TAEs have a broader scope, drawing from an entire community of supporters who have a vested interest in the success of agricultural education, its teachers, and its students. Advisory boards are in place to evaluate program issues, and alumni affiliates find funds and resources.

Some educators have hesitated starting a TAE, concerned with the work involved and trying to find time and energy for one more meeting. A local TAE, however, is designed to support the teacher in a variety of ways. When partners are brought together, problems are solved and resources found. Teachers often find that resources just show up because partners perceive a need and take steps to meet it, taking the burden off the teacher to be all things to all people.

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“Done right, the local Team Ag Ed chairman puts together meetings and coordinates activities, running things by the teacher so they don’t have to spend their time on it” beyond providing and receiving advice, Gill said. The teacher shouldn’t perceive the TAE as solely their responsibility any more than the advisory committee or the alumni. The key is to find people who are passionate about agricultural education and give them the flexibility to help.

A local TAE should consist of representatives from the school administration; the local FFA alumni affiliate and FFA foundation; the chapter advisory board; community businesses and industry and/or local commodities groups; a fellow teacher; a parent and a student. At meetings, each representative should provide information about their efforts to promote the program and pose questions for the group for discussion and possible solutions. The agriculture educator can also use the time to pose issues and ask for input from the group on ways to solve problems and find resources.

Kevin Fochs, senior agricultural education instructor at Park High School in Livingston, Mont., and advisor of the Park FFA Chapter, helped set up Montana’s TAE and thinks the concept works. “When I first started teaching, we could only take two to four seniors to the national convention, but in the last 10 years, we’ve taken 15-25 kids. With the burden of travel costs, we wouldn’t ever have been able to do that without the alumni.”

One struggle in a small community is the limited number of people to serve on the TAE, advisory committee, and alumni. It is possible to utilize the same people, but it is imperative that everyone understands the role they serve at respective meetings. Fochs uses his alumni affiliate as his TAE but says that doesn’t work without clear communication. “I see the TAE philosophy as keeping everybody on the same page so we don’t have people working toward a goal not aware of what another group is doing,” he said. Park FFA Chapter’s alumni and student chapters meet at the same time so Fochs can provide guidance to both, when needed.

To start a local TAE, contact your state FFA staff or LPS specialist for operating procedures and sample bylaws. And clarify expectations early. “Don’t be scared of it,” Gill said. “If you spend the time initially, once you get it going, it takes a tremendous load off because you’re able to delegate so many things.”

TAE Tips

When it comes to forming a TAE, Park FFA advisor Kevin Fochs recommends:

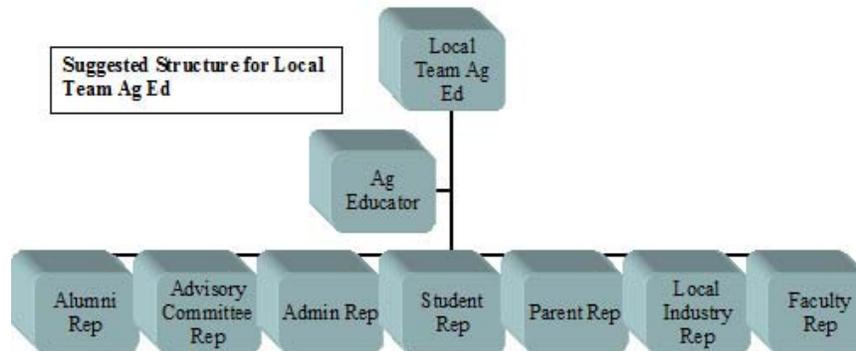
- Have your TAE do a needs assessment or survey of the business community to help drive what you do. “It’s a good way to evaluate your curriculum and your program, what

you're teaching, to see if you're meeting the needs of the community," Fochs said.

- Don't meet just to meet. "Always have some purpose for your meeting," Fochs said. "People are just too busy now for regular meetings. The less you can meet and still get things done, the better."
- Always have constant communication. Even after 24 years of teaching, Fochs still needs to refresh his alumni and advisory groups on their roles. "Since there's always change, even established groups can use a reminder: We're here to support the students," he said.

The Local Program Success Team recommends:

- Outline the responsibilities of each group to reduce confusion. The most problems will come when people share responsibilities in the TAE, advisory committee and alumni.
- Be clear that partners are there for support and assistance, not to create more work for the agriculture teacher.
- Promote an open and honest atmosphere. Sometimes the truth hurts, but you must accept it as a means toward improving the program to positively affect student outcomes.
- Use the TAE as a means to both share what is happening in the agriculture program and learn what is happening in the community around the program. It is an opportunity to become proactive and address changes that will keep the agriculture program viable in the future.



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Justifying Extended (Summer) Contracts

By Stacey McArthur

The saying goes that variety is the spice of life, and Tammy Bartholomew has no shortage of flavor. As the agriculture teacher at Drexel High in Missouri, she believes in supervised agricultural experience programs (SAEs). One of her students sells sweet corn at roadside stands and raises popcorn. He even went so far as to create his own business, processing and packaging his popcorn and selling it to the local Wal-Mart store.

Never one to squash creativity and desire, Bartholomew encourages her students to develop SAEs that are tailored to their personal interests. Having a student who is an outdoor videographer definitely spices up the program. The Maximum Archery television show has resulted in her student filming in 16 states, four Canadian Provinces, Mexico, South Africa and New Zealand.

“It’s all about encouraging kids to have a little initiative and belief in themselves,” said Bartholomew, who has been teaching in Missouri for more than 20 years. “That takes a personal relationship.”

It also takes time—time often not available to teachers working just nine months a year. The average agriculture teacher works through the summer on several projects—from SAEs and camps to chapter leadership development—making extended (summer) contracts critical to their jobs.

During this time when legislators are scrutinizing all state budgets, Bartholomew thinks it’s up to agriculture teachers to prove these contracts are necessary. “When I first started teaching, it was understood teachers needed 12-month contracts. Now, there are big battles taking place over balancing school budgets. Justification of the year-round program really falls on the shoulders of the teacher,” she said. “If we are communicating with our parents and our school district and they can see that we’re doing our jobs during the summer, we shouldn’t have to justify our summer contract.”

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She also suggests that teachers should submit a summer calendar, talk to administrators on a weekly basis during the summer, create annual reports at the end of the year and participate in any vocational program evaluation processes.

In Missouri, 12-month contracts for agriculture instructors are encouraged by districts and tied into state funding. "Anything less is not approved by the state department. To get [career and technical] funding for salaries and equipment, we must be year-round," said Bartholomew, also the *Missouri Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association* state legislative chairman.

In Kentucky, extended contracts for agricultural educators are required by state law. Some would like to change that, said Curt Lucas, Ag Ed Program Consultant and State FFA Advisor. During the recession in the early 1980s, schools looked at cutting these contracts. There was enough backlash from principals, teachers and community members to defeat the movement. In addition, the Kentucky Farm Bureau helped shore up the position by passing a mandate in favor of extended contract days for agriculture teachers.

"That's been challenged several times but always upheld," Lucas said. "In most communities where ag teachers are doing an effective job, people see the value of the extended contracts and when they are threatened, the community makes their feelings known."

Currently Lucas isn't aware of any formal challenge to dispelling extended contracts even though the legislator is trying to reduce the state's budget deficit by cutting two days out of all teachers' contracts.

"It would be great if all teachers could maintain the extended ties to students throughout the summer, but not all teachers want to work through the summer," Lucas said. "Ag teachers need to work through the summer. Otherwise during the school year, a teacher would have to be beyond what normal expectation is to work those days and hours."

It is important to remember that in states where extended contracts are not legislated, every teacher is only a new superintendent or principal away from losing it. In states where it is legislated, you are only a committee vote away from experiencing the fight of your career to keep it. Extended contracts should never be taken for granted, especially in these difficult economic times. If you have an extended contract, it is in your best interest to make sure your administration, parents, and community leaders see you working with students during those hours. It is a whole lot easier to gain support when you've been doing the job you are paid for.

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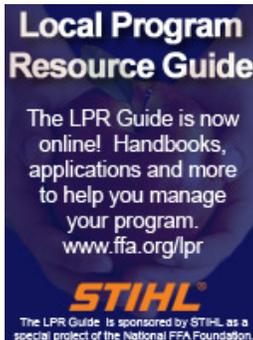
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Accountability in the Classroom

By Deb Buehler

An increasing focus on academic achievement in career and technical education is stretching agriculture educators to integrate more science, math, social studies and language arts into course instruction. As a result, agriculture educators are collaborating with core content teachers to improve academic rigor and relevance.

Tim Ray, an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Dallas High School in central Oregon, was one of several who participated in a National Research Center for the Association of Career and Technical Education study focused on integrating math into horticulture instruction. For Ray, it just made sense; core concepts need to be integrated in a contextual way.

“Students don’t even realize they are applying math in hands-on experiences. Now I help them make the connection between what we are learning and the academic content they’ve already seen in math or science class,” Ray said.

Ray works in partnership with a math teacher and has served in the math Professional Learning Community (PLC) in his school. Through his work on the PLC, he was able to seek further ways to integrate math into agriculture and shop classes. In shop classes students are measuring, adding fractions and making things square. “It is a teachable moment,” Ray explains. “If we build a trailer that isn’t square, it won’t go down the road straight.”

Agriculture is housed in the science department at Dallas High School so Ray works closely with science teachers, too. “Next year we will delve into the CASE curriculum to expose students to physics in shop classes,” Ray said. “We are trying to incorporate the academic core curriculum areas as much as possible.”

Texas Takes Another Approach

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“Our state standards have recently been rewritten,” said Ron Whitson, Texas Ag Ed Program Director with the Texas Education Agency. “As a result, we’ve created a new course called Mathematics Applications in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.”

Texas has instituted the “4 By 4” graduation expectation whereby all high school students must complete four years of math, science, English and social studies. The expectation was limiting agriculture classes students could take while still meeting the requirement. The new course brings together math that was already being taught in a variety of agriculture classes. The course will reinforce algebra I and II, calculus and trigonometry embedded in agriculture content while enabling students to meet a math requirement.

“We also have some courses that will count as a fourth science credit,” Whitson said. “But the math course is unique in that it is based on pulling together all of the mathematics content and showing students how to utilize skills they’ve already learned.”

It hasn’t been determined whether agriculture or math teachers will be teaching the course, but a professional development component will be a requirement. Whitson anticipated that an online course will be made available as an intensive professional development opportunity. The content itself isn’t new; it is bringing together concepts that deal with agribusiness such as figuring livestock weight gain over time or calculating seed rates for a crop or estimating greenhouse capacity.

Collaboration Cornerstone

Collaboration may be the best way to ensure that agriculture programs remain relevant because agriculture classes enable students to see direct applications for what they are learning in core content areas.

“Collaboration is going to be huge in terms of education budgets,” adds Ray. “We will be able to maximize equipment and resources within the whole school during these tight economic times.”

Ray noted “Everyone wants the students to be successful in life. In ag classes our students are also learning important life skills such as respect, showing up on time, cleaning up after yourself – values that are relevant in any area of adult life.” Students are learning to be accountable just as educators hold themselves accountable.

“By doing what we say we are going to do, our students have elevated themselves and the ag program so that the rest of the school is receptive and supportive,” Ray concludes. “Core curriculum educators realize that we are all working to make the student body better.”

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Perspectives

Professional Partnerships and Accountability: Two Characteristics of Effective Agricultural Educators

By Antoine J. Alston, Ph.D., Professor, NC A&T State University, Greensboro, NC

Throughout my years in education I have learned two important lessons. The first lesson is that one cannot do everything by him or herself, and the second lesson is one must perform the job that he or she is paid to do... or simply stated one must be accountable. As a young educator 10 years ago, I realized that trying to “save the world” by myself was at the very least a daunting task and that I needed help along the way.

Consequently, while trying to “save the world,” I also realized that I was constantly being evaluated through both formal and informal channels by colleagues, administrators and the community at large. A teacher education program cannot prepare aspiring teachers for all of the situations that they will encounter as novice teachers; however, I truly believe that a teacher education program has a duty to instill within teachers the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to foster beneficial professional relationships and accountability.

It is through professional partnerships that encourage networks of collegiality and transparent accountability that teachers of all experience levels feel empowered, cooperative and willing to take risk. According to Gonzales (1995) a major source of teacher attrition is the lack of positive interaction and feelings of isolation from colleagues and administrators. Moreover, according to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005), 52 percent of teachers who leave the profession indicate a lack of involvement in and influence over school policy as reasons for their attrition. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the field of agriculture, many opportunities exist for agricultural educators to create cooperative networks among fellow educators. Collaborative lessons could be performed across subject matter. For example agriculture educators could collaborate with the school's history department during African American History Month to educate students about the accomplishments of African Americans to American agriculture. In doing this, teachers are combining the

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disciplines of agricultural science in conjunction with a study of culture and historical achievement, thus creating a collegial connection that would not have existed otherwise. Agriculture educators should make it a priority to volunteer on school committees in which policies are made that could ultimately impact their respective programs. As the old adage goes, "If you are not at the table then you do not eat."

In relation to the concept of teacher accountability, while I agree that teachers should be consistently evaluated in order to ensure that students are being provided with a high - quality education, assessments should be valid with multiple methods utilized depending upon the discipline taught. Accountability is a concept with a positive sounding name and tremendous surface appeal among policy makers and administrators. Accountability is a response to the popular perception that the cost of the public education has soared while the quality has plummeted. Many models of teacher accountability exist such as merit-based pay, behavioral assessment, high-stakes testing and portfolio assessments. So what does accountability mean for secondary agriculture educators? With a great majority of agriculture educators in most states on 12-month contracts of employment, coupled with very challenging and complex economic conditions, it is more imperative than ever that agriculture educators are providing students with a dynamic learning experience. For secondary agricultural education, this translates into agriculture educators that effectively address all three components of the standard agricultural education model equally (classroom/laboratory, FFA, and supervised agricultural experience programs [SAEs]). Particular emphasis should be given to summer activities in the agriculture educator's calendar of activities (i.e. SAE activities, FFA Convention, in-service workshops).

In order to document program activities and accomplishments, agriculture educators could develop and maintain program websites, in addition to keeping a weekly journal of activities accomplished and a program scrapbook. Whenever possible, administrators, community stakeholders and other colleagues should be invited to participate in program activities such as being judges for career development events, guest speakers and resource personnel. By integrating others into the fabric of the program, accountability becomes transparent, thus removing barriers of defensiveness by teachers and isolation, and instead creating environments of collegiality focused upon the ultimate goal of student achievement.

As an agriculture educator, collegiality and accountability are imperative to one's professional longevity. Having an understanding of these concepts contributes to the professional growth of dynamic agriculture educators who possess the knowledge, skills and dispositions to positively impact the development of intellectual capital within the students they serve.

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LifeKnowledge Spotlight

Kelly Sustaining Leadership Development into the Summer

By Kelly Hoelting, Agriculture Teacher, Mission Valley High School, Eskridge, Kan.

1. Why is it important to continue to work during the summer to help students develop leadership skills?

It is a well-researched fact that student retention of knowledge drops over the summer months. Not only is this true for book work, but also for many of the social and leadership skills that students develop over the school year. Therefore, it is essential that those of us in agricultural education maintain the continuity we have in our classrooms throughout the summer months. This may include supervised agricultural experience (SAE) project visits, participation in fairs, summer leadership conferences or officer retreats. If we can teach students to keep their minds open to learning and use leadership skills throughout the summer, those skills can be built upon at the start of the next school year rather than relearned.

2. How can teachers sustain leadership development for students over the summer?

The summertime provides an excellent opportunity for hands-on leadership development for both students and teachers. A great way to sustain leadership is to provide opportunities for students to use their skills.

“Incentive programs are an easy way to keep students motivated over the summer months. In our FFA chapter, we keep track of summer participation in activities. Students are rewarded when school resumes, and this gives them something to transition back into the school year.”

Activities planned over the summer are the easiest way to keep students involved and active in the organization. You might encourage students to work with brothers and sisters or younger members in the community. SAE mentoring programs and local fairs are another way to keep students involved and interacting with a variety of people. Many students need incentives to keep them motivated throughout the summer. By providing these, a teacher can make the most of summer activities.

3. What are some ways to integrate LifeKnowledge (LK) into summer FFA activities?

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There are several ways to integrate LK into summer activities, but here are five things that have worked well for me.

1. **SAE Mentoring Programs**—Older FFA members help younger members with similar SAEs to keep up records, answer questions and provide advice throughout the summer.
2. **Officer Retreat**—Utilizing the goal-setting activities and team-building sections of the LK curriculum is an excellent way to plan an officer retreat and to continue the leadership development of the new officers. This will help with a smooth transition into the school year.
3. **Chapter Meeting**—Holding a chapter meeting in the summer is a great way to have fun while infusing LK and leadership development. Team-building activities can be an exciting way to spend a summer evening. Utilize state and chapter officers to run activities and provide the LK training behind each activity.
4. **County Fairs, Town Fairs and Carnivals**—Becoming an advocate for agriculture is an excellent way to use leadership skills while promoting the agriculture classroom and FFA. Students can develop a presentation board or a booth to display at a local event. These events provide many opportunities to use LK and foster responsibility among your FFA membership.
5. **FFA Newsletter**—A summer newsletter with short articles about leadership is an easy way to infuse LK into the community and the students. Time the newsletter close to the start of school and it can also serve as a recruitment tool and upcoming events calendar.

4. How do you keep students from “taking the summer off” from their own personal growth development?

Incentive programs are an easy way to keep students motivated over the summer months. In our FFA chapter, we keep track of summer participation in activities. Students are rewarded when school resumes, and this gives them something to transition back into the school year. Planning an activity at the beginning, middle and end of the summer can help “bookend” leadership development and keep students thinking throughout the summertime.

An easy way to help an already busy student is to have them work with the activities they already have planned for the summer. Involvement in 4-H, youth groups and sport activities are all excellent ways that students can continue using their leadership skills without adding to their busy schedule. As an advisor, we can help teach students to use their leadership skills in these other organizations so they get more hands-on experience in developing their own personal leadership.

5. How can you build leadership development into SAE visits?

For this one, I come back to SAE mentoring programs as an excellent way to achieve leadership development during SAE visits. Older FFA members can mentor younger members, 4-Hers, brothers and sisters with similar projects or SAEs. By promoting this interaction during visits, an advisor can see the progress in FFA members over the summertime. This information can be tracked in record book or SAE packets.

Meeting with the student and their parents or a boss regarding specific LK precepts also provides opportunities for leadership development. For example, decision making is one precept that is very important. Student progress can be tracked over the summer while being tied into your curriculum and use of LK.

6. How do you encourage students to participate in summer officer retreats, SAE visits, fairs, camps, etc.? What percentage of your students participate in some sort of summer agriculture-related leadership activity?

Our chapter has a point incentive program. The more activities a student participates in during the summer, the larger the reward at the end of the year. As an example, SAE visits are related to the student's grade for the upcoming year, and next year's grade begins the day after school lets out. This helps keep them motivated and accountable throughout the summer. In addition, our officers are required to sign a contract for their participation. If an officer misses an important activity, it can be grounds for removal from office.

As far as percentages for student participation, 100 percent of our officers participate in the officer retreat, 65 to 70 percent of our students participate in SAE visits and/or fairs and 90 percent of our students participate in a summer recruitment event.

7. How does keeping leadership development a priority through the summer help when the students come back to school in the fall?

Keeping leadership development a priority makes the transition into fall activities easier. This also helps the excitement level of students when they come back to school. They have high expectations for themselves and their chapters. By setting high expectations, the school year will have an established starting point and things will move forward at a quicker pace. That being said, it's important for us as advisors to provide students with the tools and support to succeed in all of their events and activities throughout the summer.

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Making a Difference

The Resource for Agriculture Educators



May 2010

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Question for the Profession



Administration: Friend or Foe?

By Nina Crutchfield, Local Program Success Specialist

Ever dreaded going to your principal's office as if you were the one in trouble? Do you find yourself trying to get psyched to do battle when you go to a faculty or board meeting? Why is that? We're all supposed to be working together to promote student learning. So why do we view our administration as a foe to be conquered, as an opponent we must defeat to get what we want/need, as an adversary out to do us harm?

Have the roles of teachers versus administrators become so negative that we can't even stand to be in the same room? I can remember saying that the best administrator was the one that stayed out of my building and left me alone. Really? Was I so naïve that I didn't have a clue that I should be promoting my program and students to my administration so that they valued the agriculture department rather than seeing it as an appendage they could easily get rid of when times got tough?

Our current culture in education is one of opposites. We have got to learn to cultivate professional relationships and foster understanding of our programs, rather than focusing on differences and divides. My sincere hope is that everyone reading this will spend some time considering the issues highlighted in this month's edition of *Making a Difference* and post strategies for improving our relationships with the educators with whom we work.

I ask those who are doing it well to share how they made positive changes in their professional partnerships. Express how positive relationships make accountability a moot point, how sharing students can be an asset rather than a problem, and how to make the agriculture program a MUST-have rather than a NICE-to-have in the eyes of administrators, counselors, fellow teachers, parents, community leaders, and students.

Share all those ideas and more at the [NAAE's Communities of Practice](#).

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Teacher Resources

Agribusiness Made Easier

The Chicago Mercantile Exchange has an education page. Simply register (it's free) and select from a variety of topics under the Education Resources tab on the right. There are short videos that discuss futures markets, trading options, market commodities, interest rates and even currencies.

<http://www.cmegroup.com/education/index.html>

Water, Water Everywhere

National Geographic's lesson on water is available. Teach students the realities of water shortages domestically and abroad and spice up your agriculture lesson with some real geography.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/lessons/04/g912/newswate>

Rural Business Opportunity Grants

The Rural Business Opportunity Grants program promotes sustainable economic development in rural communities with exceptional needs through provision of training and technical assistance for business development, entrepreneurs, and economic development officials. The program also assists with economic development planning. The types of projects that may be funded might include identification/analysis of business opportunities that will utilize local material and human resources; provision of leadership development training to existing or prospective rural entrepreneurs and managers; business support centers; centers for training, technology and export trade; and, economic development planning. Full details and applications can be found at the [USDA rural development site](#) and the [Rural Business Opportunity Grant page](#).

Now Seeking Participant Teams for the ITEST Program

The National Science Foundation is looking for participant teams in its Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers (ITEST) program. The application deadline is April 30, 2010. The project is limited to 20 school teams from across the country. Apply today,

http://www4.nau.edu/CSTL/EYE_POD_Application.pdf.

The Examining Your Environment through the Power of Data (EYE-POD) project provides teachers with the means to implement interdisciplinary, technology-integrated, project-based learning modules with an Earth-science focus in their classrooms. Students learn science and math concepts as

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they collect and analyze data in an attempt to solve a community problem and communicate those solutions through the use of geographic information systems (GIS) software.

A team of one secondary career and technical education teacher and one science or math teacher; or pair of science or math teachers from the same school must apply together. Upon completion, participants will receive:

- \$1,000 stipend
- Some travel assistance to scenic Flagstaff, Arizona
- Tuition assistance for optional three graduate credits
- ArcGIS desktop software site licenses for their schools
- Mobile data collection devices and resource materials for their schools
- 10 days of exciting and engaging onsite professional learning experiences with continuing academic year online support
-

Applicants must commit to full participation in one of two scheduled 10-day professional development institutes at the Northern Arizona University—Flagstaff, Arizona Mountain Campus. Institute dates are: June 7-18, 2010, or July 19-30, 2010. *An additional paid week of advanced GIS training will be offered to participants during summer 2011.*

Click for an [application and more information](#).

For more information, contact:

Lori Hare

Professional Development Associate

Center for Science Teaching and Learning Northern Arizona University

Box 5697 Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5697

928-523-6008

Lori.Hare@nau.edu

<http://www4.nau.edu/cstl/>

Extension Experts at Your Fingertips

Broaden your knowledge base and access agriculture experts from all over the country by participating in Extension's [Communities of Practice](#) and [Ask An Expert](#). Check out their YouTube [video](#) that puts agricultural extension into perspective in this digital age. It's impossible for agriculture teachers to know everything, but it's easy to seek help from those in the field with the research and producer contacts. Check out the latest efforts from agricultural extension at <http://www.extension.org/> and <http://www.extension.org/ask>.

GetBiotechSmart.com

As an agriculture educator, you are equipping future leaders to address the dynamic need to feed more people on less land. The science behind biotechnology can be hard to find, and we invite you to learn more at GetBiotechSmart.com. You'll find tools for you and your students to research the connection between biotechnology and critical issues facing the world. Resources on the site include:

- Grade-specific lesson plans
- Biotechnology video podcasts and research links

- E-learning modules that allow you to explore the many aspects of biotechnology

We hope you'll join us in our efforts to equip future leaders to understand biotechnology and how it can ensure a food supply for our growing world population. Please visit us soon at GetBiotechSmart.com.

Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)

CAST is a professional organization dedicated to assembling, interpreting and communicating credible science-based information to legislators, regulators, policymakers, the media, the private sector and the public. You will find they have a page full of links to resources for the science of teaching agriculture, food and natural resources at <http://www.cast-science.org/educationResources.asp>.

SmartEdge financial literacy program

The National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE), in partnership with SmartEdge-GMAC and the National FFA Foundation, is pleased to provide the SmartEdge-GMAC financial literacy program. This program is aimed at helping people make better financial decisions by providing them with information about budgeting, credit reports and credit scoring, as well as other tools. NAAE and GMAC Financial Services will provide any interested agriculture educator the training necessary to become a SmartEdge facilitator as well as a \$100 incentive for each of the first 100 eligible sessions presented.

To find out more, see the [SmartEdge-GMAC Facilitator Information](#). All agriculture educators who would like to receive this free financial curriculum must participate in an archived training webinar. [Click here to access that webinar](#). If you have any questions about this opportunity, contact Alissa Smith, asmith.naae@uky.edu or (800) 509-0204.

FREE DVDs on Animal Science Topics

Showmaster has created a collection of RFD-TV programs on DVD for use in the classroom! Agricultural education personnel are invited to order free of charge by using [this form](#).

Agricultural Issues in the News

CBS has done a series of stories on agricultural issues. Use the videos to introduce topics, kindle classroom discussions and train agricultural issues career development event teams. The links below address the use of antibiotics in livestock feedstuffs and the increase of drug-resistant biologicals.

Preview - The Early Show 2/9/2010

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6189199n&tag=api>

Part I - Katie Kouric CBS Evening News 2/9/2010

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6191894n&tag=api>

Preview to Part II - Katie Kouric CBS Evening News 2/9/2010
<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6192300n&tag=api>

Part II - Katie Kouric CBS Evening News 2/10/2010
<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6195682n&tag=contentMain;contentBody>

This link should take you to a page with all of these and more.
<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/eveningnews/?tag=bc>

Agriculture Lesson Plans Available from Purdue
<http://www.ydae.purdue.edu/undergrad/aged/links.cfm>

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National Association of Agricultural Educators

300 Garrigus Building • Lexington, KY 40546-0215

Phone: (800) 509-0204 or (859) 257-2224

Fax: (859) 323-3919 **Email:** naae@uky.edu

Website: <http://www.naae.org>

DATE: February 4, 2010

TO: Potential GMAC SmartEdge Presenters

FROM: Alissa F. Smith, NAAE Associate Executive Director

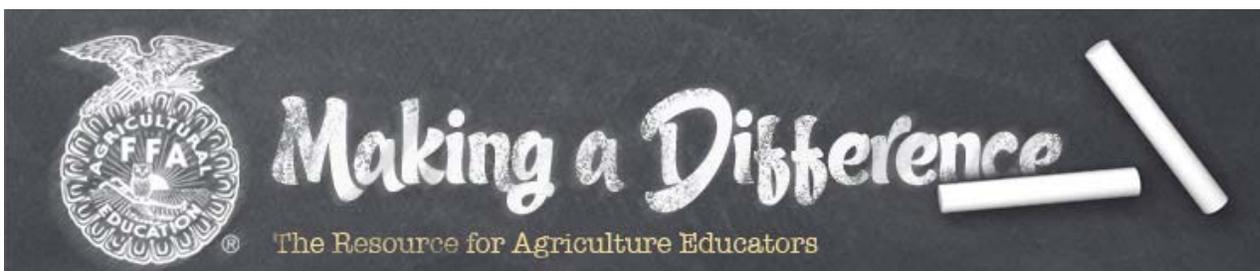
SUBJECT: GMAC SmartEdge Financial Educational Campaign

Thank you for making financial literacy a priority in your classroom. All individuals that would like to provide the GMAC SmartEdge curriculum to their student or group must first attend a training webinar. The first webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at 4:00-5:30 pm EST. Please sign up at <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/642777497> in order to attend the training workshop. If you are unable to attend the webinar but are still interested in this opportunity, please contact Alissa Smith, asmith.naae@uky.edu or (800) 509-0204.

NAAE will provide each trained individual a \$100 incentive for each session that they present (this is limited to the first 100 sessions that are presented nationwide). The session must have at least thirty (30) attendees to qualify for the incentive. However, you may combine multiple sessions together to make your thirty total. Additionally, the instructor must also complete the following in order to receive the \$100 incentive:

- Provide the scheduled date and time of the session(s) least 30 days prior to the event. This will allow time for your Smart Financial Decisions Workbooks to be ordered and shipped to you before the event.
- Provide any cancellations/changes to GMAC SmartEdge sessions immediately to the NAAE office. A GMAC representative may attend your session so it is important for them to know of any changes as soon as possible so they can adjust/cancel travel plans.
- Conduct sessions using information provided from the GMAC SmartEdge slide presentation.
- Have attendees at each SmartEdge session complete an attendance sheet providing their name and address. GMAC and its affiliates will not use this information for marketing purposes or share this information with a third party for their marketing purposes.
 - The information on each sheet will be for GMAC's exclusive use.
 - Each attendee should print their own name (please do not type or sign)
 - Substitute forms are NOT acceptable; attendance sheets supplied to you by NAAE and GMAC must be used.
 - Please provide separate attendance sheets for each session.
 - Individual addresses are required; attendees may NOT use a common address (example school or church address))

- Submit the attendance sheet within three (3) days of session date to the NAAE office
- Have attendees complete a Participant Feedback Form and submit all forms to the NAAE office by fax or email within three (3) days of completing the session.
- Complete a Partners Feedback Survey on the GMAC SmartEdge website within three (3) days of completing the session.
- Only presenters that conduct session which have at least thirty (30) attendees, have been properly recorded, and all of the required paperwork has been submitted within the time frame allotted are eligible for the \$100 incentive. Incentive checks will be mailed only after all requirements have been met. Presenters may conduct numerous sessions and receive the incentive each time as long as each session meets the requirements.



May 2010

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FFA Buzz

2010 Convention Planning Website Now Available

The 2010 convention planning website, www.ffa.org/convention, is now live! From planning tips and fundraising ideas to instructions on how to secure hotel rooms, we have the information you'll need to begin planning your trip to Indianapolis for the 83rd National FFA Convention, Oct. 20-23. Be sure to check back often to see what's new and exciting for this year's national convention. Questions? Contact Julie Woodard, 317-802-4310 or jwoodard@ffa.org.

Changes on the Way for ffa.org

State staff and advisors, take note. FFA is currently undertaking a large-scale project to update the functionality and design of ffa.org. These changes are necessary to allow the website to interact with other critical systems to collect and report data - including membership information. During the next few months, we will be asking for your input and giving you opportunities to preview the site changes. Tell us what you would like to see on the new site! Take the [ffa.org web survey](#). Thanks in advance for your comments, and remember to be on the lookout for important ffa.org updates effective Sept. 1, 2010.

FFA Heads to Africa

Welcome to FFA Global Outreach: Africa (FFA GO: Africa), a special three-week program that will offer six college-age students the opportunity of a lifetime: an all-expenses-paid trip to Zambia, Africa, to help local farmers fight area hunger and poverty through sustainable agriculture and conservation. The program is made possible through a generous gift from the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. To learn more, visit the [Collegiate webpage](#) on ffa.org. If you have questions about FFA GO: Africa, contact Marty Tatman, FFA education specialist, mtatman@ffa.org or 317-802-4356.

Check out the latest from LifeKnowledge

Want to get some planning accomplished early for the 2010-2011 school year? Sign up for the final LifeKnowledge University webinar before the summer months: LifeKnowledge Online – Tools, Guides and Plans for a Total Program. The webinar will be presented on Tuesday, May 11 at 6 p.m. EST. Click [here](#) to sign up! While you're at www.ffa.org/lifeknowledge, check out the LK

Difference directly to
your inbox each month.

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in Action podcasts - providing you with helpful tips and information from agriculture educators around the country.

Judges Needed

The National FFA Organization is accepting nominations for judges for the Agricultural Proficiency Awards, Agriscience Awards, and National Chapter Awards at the 83rd National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Ind., this fall. The Agricultural Proficiency and the Star awards judging will take place on Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010, and all judges will be invited to an awards luncheon on that day. The Agriscience Awards will be judged on Wednesday, Oct. 20 and Thursday, Oct. 21. National Chapter Awards will be judged on Wednesday, Oct. 20. Convention judging is voluntary. FFA does not cover any expenses for the judges. Nominations can be submitted on the form located [here](#). The completed form can be mailed to Teri Buchholtz, National FFA Organization, P.O. Box 68960, Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960 or faxed to her, 317-802-5419.

National FFA CDE Add/Delete Changes

Revisions have been made to the national career development events add/delete process. The newly revised process and policy (pages 7 and 9, http://www.ffa.org/documents/cde_handbook.pdf) was implemented in February 2010 and will be utilized at national FFA convention starting in 2010.

Keep These Dates in Mind...

American Degree applications due – June 15

Honorary American Degree applications due – June 15

Proficiency Awards applications due – July 15

Agri-Entrepreneurship applications due – July 15

2010 American Degree and Proficiency Application Reminder

In processing the applications last year, we saw several applications that contained the next year's hours. All 2010 applications end on Dec. 31, 2009. DO NOT include any 2010 hours in the financial section of any applications.

These hours will be excluded during qualification checks for the American Degree and the national judging of the proficiency applications.

Coming Soon: American Degree Requirement Change

Start preparing your students now: A change in the American Degree requirements will be implemented with the 2011 application process. The community service hours' requirement will change at the chapter, state and national levels.

Chapter FFA Degree will change to the following requirement:

Have participated in at least 10 hours of community service activities. These hours are in addition to and cannot be duplicated as paid or unpaid supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program hours.

State FFA Degree will change to the following requirement:

Have participated in at least 25 hours within at least two different community service activities (NOTE:15 more than Chapter Degree). These hours are in addition to and cannot be duplicated as paid or unpaid SAE hours.

American FFA Degree will change to the following requirements:

Have a record of outstanding leadership activities; have participated in at least 50 hours in at least three different community service activities (25 more than State Degree; these hours are in addition to and cannot be duplicated as paid or unpaid SAE hours); and have achieved a high school scholastic record of "C" or better, as certified by the principal or superintendent.

These hours may be cumulative. Example:

--10 hours required for Chapter Degree

--15 more hours are required for the State Degree

--25 more hours are required for the American Degree, for a total of 50 hours.

These hours may NOT be duplicated for Directed Lab (unpaid hours).

2015 American Degree Upgrade

The applicants for the 2015 American Degree need to start planning now for the financial requirement change to go into effect calendar year 2015.

Start Records as a:

- Freshman – 2011
- Sophomore – 2012
- Junior – 2013
- Senior – 2014
- Apply for American Degree – 2015

- A student after entering agricultural education must have:
 - 1) earned at least \$ 10,000.00 and productively invested at least \$7,500.00; or
 - 2) earned and productively invested \$2,000.00 and worked 2,250 hours in excess of scheduled class time.
 - Any combination of hours, times a factor of 3.56, plus actual dollars earned and productively invested must be equal to or greater than the number 10,000.
 - Hours used for the purpose of producing earnings reported as productively invested income shall not be duplicated as hours of credit to meet the minimum requirements for the degree.

Would You Like to Win a \$50 Gift Certificate to Shop FFA?

Do you have a great SAE Cooperative idea you would like to share with other chapters? Tell us about it! If your idea is selected as one of the best 10 ideas, you will win a \$50 gift certificate to [Shop FFA](#). Chapters selected will be recognized during the proficiency luncheon on Oct. 21, 2010, during the 83rd National FFA Convention (no travel expenses provided). If you would like to participate, e-mail

the information to proficiency@ffa.org . Include a description of the SAE Cooperative in 500 words or less, school policies used to support the SAE Cooperative, training agreements if used, operational budget, key resources or other information that could be used to duplicate the SAE Cooperative at another school. The due date May 1.

See example below:

Example:

Title of SAE

Ag Processing-Honey Bees

Description of SAE:

The student purchased two colonies of honey bees, collected the honey late summer, distracted it from the combs, bottled it in various sizes of containers, put a specially designed label on each container, advertised in the local newspaper and sold the honey to marketed customers.

Other Comments (when available):

Special attention should be given to raw honey, there have been many concerns over raw honey and the possibility of Salmonella poisoning.

- Operational Procedures
- Budget
- School Policies
- Key Resources
- Training Agreements

Sponsors Would Like to Meet Your Chapter:

Need a guest presenter at your chapter banquet? Have you ever thought of inviting the sponsors of the proficiency awards? Many sponsors would like to be engaged at the chapter level, so here is your opportunity. The sponsor information is located on the chapter certificate workbook located on the proficiency homepage. When you order your free medals with the award medal request form, information on downloading the chapter certificates are included in the mailing of your medals. If you need further clarification, e-mail proficiency@ffa.org.

2010 National FFA CDE due dates:

On-going: Submit state CDE plaque order forms at least 30 days prior to needing them

Team Declaration Forms due—June 1

Team Certification Forms due—July 1

CDE Special Needs Requests due—July 1

Student Waiver Forms due—July 1

State Speaking Judges Forms due—July 1

Prepared Public Speaking Manuscripts—Aug. 15

Agricultural Communications, Agricultural Issues, Job

Interview and Marketing Plan portfolios due—Sept. 15

Add/Delete Forms due—Oct. 19

Find forms on the [CDE webpage](#).

Log On and Vote!

By now, you've probably heard of the Pepsi Refresh initiative, a "crowd sourcing" undertaking by Pepsi that is awarding more than \$2 million to projects chosen by votes

on the Pepsi Refresh website. FFA will be submitting a project this month for voting during the month of May. Please be on the lookout for additional information when it's time to vote for those projects.

In the meantime, our friends at DECA and FCCLA, fellow career and technical student organizations, have some projects that could use your vote this month. They've agreed to publicize and vote for our projects if we support theirs. Let's spread the word and pool our resources for other career and technical student projects: Go to <http://www.refresheverything.com/index> and search on "DECA" and "FCCLA" to cast your vote.

You Make it Happen!

New name, new logo and new exciting workshops and tours are just a few reasons why all FFA alumni members should attend the dynamic four-day 2010 FFA Alumni Development Conference (formerly known as the State Leaders Conference), July 14 - 18 in Rock Island, Ill. Sponsored by TSC, the conference is designed to bring local and state FFA alumni leaders together to absorb, shout ideas and become the best alumni advocates possible. Online conference registration will be available at www.ffa.org/alumni/ until June 1. FFA alumni members are asked to contact their state's alumni leaders or visit the FFA alumni website at www.ffa.org/alumni/ for details, including a tentative schedule and registration information.

Agri-Entrepreneurs, Listen Up!

Do you have students with entrepreneurial SAEs, but your state doesn't have an agri-entrepreneurship competition? Chapters can send applications directly to the national FFA center for the national judging. The deadline is July 15; judging takes place the first Wednesday in August. While there can be only one chapter winner (award of up to \$150), it is possible to have more than one winner from a chapter at the national level (award of \$1,000). Last year, two of the 10 national winners were from the same chapter in Minnesota. Applications are available on the [agri-entrepreneurship website](#).

Help Us Reach 1 MILLION Service Hours by Convention 2010!

The [Million Hour Challenge](#) (MHC) encourages FFA members to improve their communities through service. To earn credit, projects completed between Oct. 2, 2009, and Oct. 1, 2010, can be submitted by chapter advisors through their MyFFA accounts to the online MHC database. Five awards of \$2,500 will be given during the 2010 National FFA Convention to chapters submitting the most service hours in each category. MHC is sponsored by Monsanto as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. For more program information, contact the MHC office, mhc@ffa.org or 317-802-4345.

National FFA Convention Housing

2010 National FFA Convention housing for chapters is

open. Advisors need to login to their MyFFA account to get the hotel listing and form. Convention Housing closes Tuesday, Sept. 7, 2010.

Reserving Rooms for Other Chapters?

If you are reserving rooms for other chapters and each chapter will pre-register for convention independently, please make sure you indicate on the chapter housing form the chapters and the number of rooms allotted to each chapter. We want to make sure each chapter gets the preconvention registration discount for utilizing the National FFA Housing block. If you have already submitted your chapter form, and need to update this information please contact housing@ffa.org.

Applications for National Collegiate Agricultural Ambassador Team Now Available!

The application for the 2010-2011 National Collegiate Agricultural Ambassador team is now available online. Selected ambassadors will have the opportunity to promote agricultural awareness around their community and state, as well as work with different organizations and groups to help them better understand the value and importance of agriculture. Ambassadors are awarded scholarship money for their service. Additionally, ambassadors are given a digital camera to take pictures of their presentations and the use of a laptop and LCD projector for the year. Applications must be postmarked by June 1, 2010, and can be found at www.ffa.org/collegiate. For more information or questions, contact Marty Tatman, mtatman@ffa.org. The ambassador program is sponsored by BASF - The Chemical Company, Syngenta, and Elanco Animal Health, as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

2010 International Collegiate Ag Leadership (I-CAL) Team Selected

Twelve students from across the country were recently selected to participate in the 2010 I-CAL program. The newly selected team will travel to Malaysia and Taiwan May 16 - 28 to study international grain marketing and trade and global agriculture. While overseas the team will tour numerous Asian agricultural operations, including grain-inspecting facilities, fruit/vegetable production farms, livestock operations, and open-air grain, meat and animal markets. The selected students are:

Ronald "Wil" Baxley, North Carolina State University

Devin Burton, University of Wyoming

Grant Christensen, Iowa State University

Lucas Fuess, Cornell University

Ashley Gatling, University of Arkansas

Daniel Helvig, University of Minnesota

Ryan Hrubes, Iowa State University

Caitlin Kasper, University of Minnesota

Tim Martini, Colorado State University

Adam Miller, Ridgewater College

Amy Petersen, Utah State University

Emily Schneider, Kansas State University

For more information on the program, visit www.ffa.org/collegiate. The I-CAL program is sponsored by the U.S. Grains Foundation as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

Looking for a Few Outstanding Seniors

Monsanto would like to help you recognize your outstanding high school senior in agriculture with the 2010 DEKALB Agricultural Accomplishment Award. Monsanto provides all of the award materials without cost or obligation. The DEKALB award materials include a personalized certificate suitable for framing, a pewter lapel pin and a letter of congratulations. A multi-year plaque for engraving winner's names is also available for display in the classroom or school trophy case. FFA advisors can submit requests for award materials at www.dekalbawards.com at any time throughout the 2010 school year. Please submit requests three to four weeks in advance of any award ceremonies to ensure timely receipt.

Thanks, Mom!

Five women have been selected as regional winners of Monsanto's America's Farmers Mom of the Year 2010. The public can help determine the national winner by casting votes online at www.AmericasFarmers.com. The nominees are:

- Northeast Region: Sue Roohr, Cookstown, N.J.
- Southeast Region: Erika Forsbach, Savannah, Tenn.
- Midwest Region: Cheryl Day, Cerro Gordo, Ill.
- Southwest Region: Carol Cowan, Watonga, Okla.
- West Region: Caroline Luiz, Yreka, Calif.

Encourage your students, friends and families to visit www.AmericasFarmers.com to read more about each nominee and to vote for America's Farmer Mom of the Year. Voting closes May 3 and the winner will be announced May 4.

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