2011 FFA Chapter Innovators’ Guide :::
Success Stories from Model of Innovation Award-Winning Chapters
and the Outstanding Middle School Chapter

FORWARD
THINKING

LEMOORE FFA: STUDENT DEVELOPMENT
RIDGEMONT FFA: CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT
WILSON FFA: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

OUTSTANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL
John Deere Congratulates the National FFA Models of Innovation winners!

A strong agricultural economy is crucial to our country. It is in the interest of every American to see that it remains strong. FFA helps in this endeavor by acknowledging FFA Chapters who set high expectations and accomplishment goals for their members and reached those goals by working together and learning from the experience. John Deere is pleased to be a sponsor of the National Chapter Award program.
PLOTTING A COURSE TO A NATIONAL CHAPTER AWARD

An FFA chapter’s Program of Activities is like a road map that helps to chart the year’s events. Chapters build their POA around three major areas called “divisions” – student development, chapter development and community development.

The purpose of the National Chapter Award program is to encourage chapters to develop and use a POA. Each year at the national FFA convention and expo, National Chapter Awards are presented to chapters that have successfully planned and met the objectives established in their POA.

NATIONAL CHAPTER AWARDS
In order to qualify for a national award, chapters must first receive a Gold Chapter Award on the state level. A state’s top three Gold Chapter Award winners (or a number equal to 10 percent of the state’s total number of chapters, if that number is higher than three) are eligible to compete for national awards in the National Chapter Award program.

Judging for national awards is held during the summer, when all eligible chapters are rated as Three-Star, Two-Star or One-Star. Each chapter that competes for a national award receives a multi-year plaque and a spur designating their Star rating. Chapters that receive Three-Star ratings are eligible to compete for the following awards.

MODEL OF INNOVATION AWARDS
Chapters that receive Three-Star ratings during the National Chapter Awards competition are eligible to compete for the Model of Innovation Awards. For these awards, judges look for chapters whose activities have the following characteristics: new and different; unique; something old with a creative twist; a step above the ordinary.

Based on the innovativeness of their activity that was judged during the summer, 30 of the Three-Star chapters – 10 in each of the three divisions: student, chapter and community development – are selected as finalists for the Model of Innovation Awards.

At the national FFA convention and expo, the finalists go through a presentation/interview process. (Scores from summer judging do not carry forward at this point.) Each of the 30 finalists receives a plaque and a cash award dependent upon available funds.

The top-rated chapter in each division is announced as the Model of Innovation Award winner on the main stage during the second session of the national convention and expo. Each of the three winning chapters receives a plaque and an additional cash award dependent upon available funds.

MODEL OF EXCELLENCE AWARD
Chapters that receive Three-Star ratings during the National Chapter Awards competition are also eligible to compete for the Model of Excellence Award.

Based on the overall score of their entire application (encompassing all activities in all three divisions – student, chapter and community development) that was judged during the summer, 10 of the Three-Star chapters are selected as finalists for the Model of Excellence Award.

At the national FFA convention and expo, the finalists go through a presentation/interview process. (Scores from summer judging do not carry forward at this point.) Each of the 10 finalists receives a plaque and a cash award dependent upon available funds.

The chapter selected to receive the Model of Excellence Award – the top chapter in the nation – is announced on the main stage during the second session of the national convention and expo. This chapter receives a plaque and an additional cash award dependent upon available funds.

NATIONAL OUTSTANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL CHAPTER AWARD
Middle school chapters that receive Three-Star ratings during the National Chapter Awards competition are eligible to compete for the National Outstanding Middle School Chapter Award.

Based on the overall score of their entire application (encompassing all activities in all three divisions – student, chapter and community development) that was judged during the summer, five of the Three-Star middle school chapters are selected as finalists for the National Outstanding Middle School Chapter Award.

At the national FFA convention and expo, the finalists go through a presentation/interview process. (Scores from summer judging do not carry forward at this point.) Each of the five finalists receives a plaque and a cash award dependent upon available funds.

The chapter selected to receive the National Outstanding Middle School Chapter Award – the top middle school chapter in the nation – is announced on the main stage during the second session of the national convention and expo. This chapter receives a plaque and an additional cash award dependent upon available funds.

All chapters receiving top recognition from the National FFA Organization are those that have identified goals and objectives, created workable plans, and not only achieved results but also learned from their activities.

The finalists and winners of the Model of Innovation Awards and the National Outstanding Middle School Chapter Award for 2011 are presented in this guide along with their unique stories about how they pursued and accomplished their goals.
At the 2011 National FFA Convention, each of the following outstanding chapters received a Model of Innovation Award – and the top-rated middle school chapter was named.

**STUDENT DEVELOPMENT ::::**

Lemoore FFA, California
Brooksville Sr. FFA, Florida
Brighton FFA, Tennessee
Marshall FFA, Missouri
Central FFA, Virginia
Garretson FFA, South Dakota
Hendersonville FFA, Tennessee
North-Linn FFA, Iowa
Riverdale FFA, Tennessee
Oelwein FFA, Iowa

**CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT ::::**

Ridgemont FFA, Ohio
Brooksville Sr. FFA, Florida
Fairbury FFA, Nebraska
Clinton Central FFA, Indiana
Freedom FFA, Wisconsin
Lodi FFA, California
Wilson FFA, Kansas
Owen Valley FFA, Indiana
Ponchatoula FFA, Louisiana
Winona FFA, Texas

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ::::**

Wilson FFA, Kansas
Briggsdale FFA, Colorado
Garretson FFA, South Dakota
Lehi FFA, Utah
Burlington FFA, Oklahoma
Richland 44 FFA, North Dakota
Fleming County FFA, Kentucky
St. Amant FFA, Louisiana
Bradley Central FFA, Tennessee
Wilson Central FFA, Tennessee

**OUTSTANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL ::::**

Bell Middle FFA, Florida
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### STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

**They call it puppy love**

Lemoore FFA in California has the distinction of being the first California FFA chapter to raise and socialize puppies as a supervised agricultural experience.

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### CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

**Driven to succeed**

In 2011, the goal of Ohio’s Ridgemont FFA was to teach students about driving safety— not only in cars but also on agricultural equipment.

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### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**Holding out for rain**

Wilson FFA in Kansas launched an environmentally friendly project that would help conserve water while lowering water bills.

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### OUTSTANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL

**Bell’s efforts excel**

What made the Bell Middle School FFA in Florida shine so brightly? In short, commitment and follow-through, along with a healthy dose of compassion.
Guide Dogs for the Blind in San Rafael, Calif., is exactly what its name suggests: an organization that provides specially trained dogs to assist the blind and visually impaired. Lemoore FFA in Lemoore, Calif., has the distinction of being the first California FFA chapter to raise and socialize puppies as a supervised agricultural experience. During the 2010-11 school year alone, the chapter helped raise 25 puppies.

Each student who qualifies to participate in the program receives an 8- to 10-week-old pup. For the next 14 to 16 months, students will raise the pups, giving them as many experiences as possible – at the shopping mall, church, restaurants, movies and anywhere else the students may go in their daily activities. Then the pups return to the Guide Dog campus for their formal training.

“This project shows the community how high school students can be responsible and do something for someone else,” Lemoore FFA President Corey Rinaldi said. “It has shown many students in our chapter how we can directly affect others in our community.”

The program has been in place at Lemoore High School for nearly 13 years. “I am currently raising my second puppy, Kellogg,” Lemoore FFA Historian Laine Tompkins said. “My first puppy, Conway, just returned to Guide Dogs for the Blind to complete his formal training. I can hardly wait for the day when he graduates.”

While raising a puppy can be hard work, chapter members regard it as a labor of love. “I can’t imagine going to class, or pretty much anywhere, without my fist clenched around a leather leash and the sound of jingling dog tags at my side,” senior Kasaun Bull said.

Lemoore FFA Vice President Jacie Valentine is now raising her second puppy, named Kearney. “Everywhere I go, I have him at my side,” she said. “Even if I am having a bad day, I can always look at him and smile. It is an awesome feeling to know I am going to change someone’s life one day.”

Chapter Advisor Marybeth Hearn enjoys watching her students bond with their canine friends while doing important work for the community. “Raising guide dog puppies is a lot like raising children,” she said. “However, when our puppies graduate, they have a job, an important job.”

The most difficult part of raising the puppies? It isn’t leash training or potty training. It’s giving the puppies up when it’s time for them to return to Guide Dogs for the Blind. But Lemoore FFA members get the satisfaction of knowing their hard work will help someone else “see” the world, while providing them with a loyal, loving friend.
BROOKVILLE SR. FFA
WALK, DON’T RUN.

Daily exercise is critical to long-term health, but finding the time to do it isn’t always easy. Brooksville Sr. FFA in Brooksville, Fla., decided to start a program to encourage a form of exercise that nearly everyone already does on a daily basis: walking.

They launched Walk Around the World, an initiative to get people walking while wearing pedometers to measure their mileage. Brooksville Sr. FFA members conducted a survey to determine the length of each participant’s stride and gait, and then they figured the actual distance they would have to walk to circle the Earth. Then, they secured funding for 200 pedometers to measure participants’ walking progress.

Participants walked and walked for nearly 88 days, wearing their pedometers at all times. A total of 147 people participated in the event, walking a total of 24,901.5 miles (the exact circumference of the Earth) – an average of 169 miles per participant! In all, they walked approximately 58,000,000 steps, meeting their goal of traversing the distance around the world.

BRIGHTON FFA
BUILDING BETTER BODIES.

When actor Danny Thomas founded St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital 50 years ago, his mission was to serve children regardless of their race, religion or ability to pay.

That’s a mission Brighton FFA in Brighton, Tenn., can get behind – which they did when they organized the St. Jude Trike-a-Thon to benefit 5-year-old Lucy Krull, a St. Jude patient who is battling brain cancer.

Twenty members of Brighton FFA joined with the school softball team to plan the event and prepare the racetrack in Lucy’s hometown of Covington, Tenn. On March 18, 2011, 40 young tricycle riders were divided into groups and given license plates for their tiny vehicles. FFA members even designed mock driver’s licenses for participants.

During the trike-a-thon, FFA members lined the entire route of the track, and larger groups positioned themselves at the turns, where several minor accidents happened. A group of mechanically minded students set up a “bike shop” off the course to help make tricycle adjustments and repairs.

At the end of the event, FFA members distributed helium balloons to the young riders, who stood on a “Go Lucy Go” sign painted in the center of the track. All at once, the participants released the balloons in a beautiful tribute to Lucy Krull.
MARSHALL FFA
MAKING FITNESS FUN.

It isn’t always easy to convince people – particularly young people – to put down their electronic devices and take up a physical activity.

But Marshall FFA in Marshall, Mo., managed to do just that during Fitness February, a program that invited students to participate in physically challenging, yet fun, activities each week of February.

Chapter members created signs and displayed them in the halls at their high school to promote the event. They also received door prize donations from local businesses, providing another incentive for participants.

The first week of the event, they held an Open Gym Night, where 46 FFA members enjoyed a sort of fitness free-for-all while playing basketball, volleyball and kickball.

The second week was reserved for a game based on the popular NBC show, “Minute to Win It.” Like in the TV show, participants had only a minute to complete a daunting task – but in this case, there wasn’t a large sum of money on the line.

During week three, they held a competitive dodgeball tournament. For the fourth week, they planned a snow-tubing trip, but it was cancelled due to poor conditions on the slopes. Not to be deterred, the chapter members still found various ways to stay active. As it turns out, exercise – especially when it’s fun – can be habit-forming.

CENTRAL FFA
EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER.

More and more schools are giving students an opportunity to learn by doing and gain hands-on experience outside of the classroom. A perfect example is the Central FFA Chapter’s Animal Agriculture Experience program at Central High School in Woodstock, Va.

By participating in this program, students learned how to care for, handle and manage the production of farm animals, including birth. Chapter members built four animal pens at the school to house two goats and two lambs. Eight pregnant ewes were also rotated through the program, and all of them gave birth to lambs.

Central FFA members spent more than 140 hours helping care for the animals. A live webcam was used to observe the animals for two weeks. Members helped vaccinate, dock and deworm the newborn lambs. For many of the FFA members, this was the first time they had participated in this type of activity.

Armed with real-life experience, Central FFA members shared their knowledge by giving presentations to 60 middle school students and 50 high school students. And they learned an important lesson: There’s often no better teacher than experience itself.
GARRETSON FFA
PUTTING SAFETY – AND CHILDREN – FIRST.

One of the mottos of the Garretson FFA Chapter in Garretson, S.D., is, “Protect the young children, the most valuable asset of the community.” With this in mind, the chapter launched a safety program for local preschool and elementary school-age children.

To accomplish their goal of working with three safety sponsoring organizations for their Safety Is Elementary project, the chapter formed a Healthy Lifestyles Committee. Members of the committee contacted AAA to ask for their help in sponsoring a bicycle safety program; they contacted Teens Against Tobacco Use to plan a presentation on the harmful effects of tobacco; and they contacted the National Safety Council to obtain literature about farm accidents. Committee members also prepared news releases and public service announcements about the program that ran in the local newspaper and on the local television channel.

Twenty-three children participated in the bike safety program, and FFA members assisted with program registration, the teaching of safety skills, inspection of bicycles for road readiness, minor repairs, a riding test and awards. FFA members also prepared door prizes for participants in the bike safety program, and they distributed literature about accidents involving farmers.

In the end, Garretson FFA accomplished its mission: to educate – and entertain – the community’s most important resource, its youngsters.

HENDERSONVILLE FFA
SAFETY IS IN SEASON.

Hendersonville FFA in Hendersonville, Tenn., wanted to develop a Hunters Safety Course that would be available to as many students as possible and that would provide important hunting safety guidelines in a fun, educational way.

To that end, the chapter’s Outdoors Club invited other school organizations and classes, including gym class and ROTC, to take part in the course. As a result, the turnout for the initial meeting included a number of new faces.

Sessions were held at the Gallatin Hunters Safety Course Center and Hunt’s Sporting Goods Store and Archery Range. The new members joined the 60 students enrolled in agriculture and other classes, with everyone thoroughly enjoying (and, most important, passing) the Hunters Safety Course.

Along the way, Hendersonville FFA helped a number of new students gain an appreciation of the importance of safety while hunting, boating and fishing. They also encouraged other FFA chapters to develop their own outdoors clubs. To top it all off, the chapter earned the honor of hosting the archery class at the 2011 Tennessee State FFA Camp.

NORTH-LINN FFA
AN ENTREPRENEURIAL (AD)VENTURE.

America is all about free enterprise. With that in mind, members of North-Linn FFA in Troy Mills, Iowa, launched a program to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

Their goals were to encourage chapter members to start entrepreneurial supervised agricultural experience programs, to realize a 100 percent net profit from the SAEs, and to have at least 25 percent of the Greenhand members reinvest at least 50 percent of their net profits to continue their entrepreneurial ventures.

The chapter advisor gave each registered participant an interest-free $10 loan to start a business. Then, members had 30 days to put their money to work and develop their individual SAEs. Participants documented their procedures, recorded expenses and income, and developed posters detailing the skills they learned.

Forty-seven members participated in the activity – almost 79 percent of the chapter. Their entrepreneurial activities included everything from the sale of soy-based wax candles to a lawn care business.

All members realized a net profit of at least 100 percent, with a cumulative net profit of $865.50. Four of the members donated 100 percent of their net profits to charitable organizations, and 15 of the Greenhands (62.5 percent of the chapter’s Greenhand members) reinvested their profits to continue their entrepreneurial ventures. And, all loans were promptly reimbursed to the chapter advisor within 13 days of the activity’s completion.
RIVERDALE FFA
ANIMAL ACADEMY.

The members of Riverdale FFA in Murfreesboro, Tenn., like to learn about animals in a hands-on environment. In fact, they enjoy it so much they designed a one-day academy devoted to that very thing. The Animal Science Academy was created to give Riverdale students an opportunity to learn about livestock and veterinary science in an up-close-and-personal manner. The Riverdale FFA committee chairmen contacted university professors, extension agents, farmers and local agriculturalists for assistance. More than 50 percent of those contacted agreed to participate by providing educational guidance.

All agriculture students were invited to take part in the academy, which came with the added bonus of extra credit. FFA members also used Facebook, Twitter and their chapter website to promote the event.

More than 40 percent of the school’s agriculture students attended the Animal Science Academy, receiving a certification for their efforts. They learned various animal-related skills, and even got to assist with vaccinating animals. In the end, students who participated increased their competency in animal health by 30 percent from the previous year.

OELWEIN FFA
PLANTING SEEDS OF SUCCESS.

Nothing helps young students develop and grow like good mentorship. Just ask the Oelwein FFA Chapter in Iowa – they enlisted workers from the agriscience and research industries to mentor members of their chapter.

Oelwein FFA members contacted several businesses – including Fontana Park, Corner Market Greenhouses, Desi’s Landscaping, Monsanto Research Center, Northeast Iowa Community College Research Center and local animal care centers – to request mentors.

With the help of their mentors, Oelwein FFA members learned about six different career areas, with 80 percent of the mentoring taking place after school and on weekends. Better yet, 85 percent of Oelwein FFA members participated in the program for one day or more.

Afterward, members created display boards to highlight what they learned during the mentoring program. The displays were set up at the annual parent/member banquet, where participants were recognized.

Oelwein FFA members now partner with local businesses Buds ‘n Blossoms and Flowers on Main, helping raise houseplants and flowering bulb plants for the businesses. In many ways, mentoring is similar to plant care. Feed and nurture a plant regularly and it will blossom and grow – just like the members of Oelwein FFA.
Having won a Model of Innovation Award in 2010 for their anti-bullying campaign, Ridgemont FFA in Ridgeway, Ohio, knows how to put together a winning program. In 2011, their goal was to teach students about driving safety – not only in cars but also on agricultural equipment.

Members of the Ridgemont FFA Chapter helped write the grant applications to secure an impressive total of $20,500 to fund their program, the “1 Chance, 1 Choice, 1 Life Safe Driving Coalition.”

Partnering with four organizations – Ohio State Highway Patrol, Hardin County Sheriff’s Office, State Farm Insurance and Project Ignition – Ridgemont FFA linked the six-month campaign with their school’s curriculum in agricultural education, family and consumer sciences, health, math and physics.

Distracted driving is one of the biggest killers of American teenagers. Ridgemont FFA Vice President Grace Poeppelman explained how their program taught kids about the danger of distracted driving. “We had a driving simulator, and students tried to play basketball while they were also trying to control the simulator,” Poeppelman said. “It showed everyone how easy it is to be distracted while driving.”

Students were invited to play the popular driving game Super Mario Kart – but with an added wrinkle. They were asked to text while playing. The result? Texting increased drivers’ chances of getting into an accident by 85 percent.

The Hardin County Sheriff’s Office also got involved, setting up an obstacle course at the school where students wore “drunk driving goggles” that simulated different blood alcohol levels. When students tried to drive a golf cart while wearing the goggles, they learned firsthand what it felt like to drive while impaired.

Ridgemont FFA chose to promote safe driving partly because of the rural location of their school. According to student advisor Andrew Scharf, 70 percent of fatal crashes happen on rural roads. He also noted how many accidents happen on farms, which are plentiful in their neck of the woods.

“We brought in a local farmer to educate ag classes on what to do in compromising circumstances involving agricultural equipment,” said Cody Seiler, chapter treasurer. “The farmer passed out worksheets and taught students how to be better drivers.”

Chapter Advisor Stephanie Jolliff was proud to see her students create a winning program for the second consecutive year, adding that they deserve all the credit. “We are preparing youth to be leaders of this world,” Jolliff said. “We’re extremely excited how these kids can create true, measurable change.”
The University of Nebraska is home to one of the best football programs in the country, with five national championships and three Heisman trophies under its belt. But that didn’t stop Nebraska’s Fairbury FFA and its FFA alumni affiliate from challenging the Nebraska Cornhuskers to a friendly red-blue fundraiser basketball game.

Fairbury FFA members invited four seniors from the Huskers team to an event that was sure to excite their community. To promote the game, they mailed 90 letters to potential sponsors; placed 40 posters in local stores, restaurants and offices; and displayed 12 posters at Fairbury Jr./Sr. High School. They also contacted 10 business leaders to ask for sponsorship.

Then they organized a community basketball team consisting of 20 players and three senior FFA chapter members to match up against the Huskers.

More than 90 percent of the Fairbury FFA members got involved, running the concession stand and handling other tasks. Parents also helped by preparing a meal for all participants, including the Husker players.

Two FFA members sang “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and three others announced the game while running the clock and operating the sound system. More than 200 people attended the game, and the Fairbury FFA Chapter raised more than $2,400.

Perhaps they’ll never tell who won the basketball game. But like everything in Nebraska, if it concerns sports, it will almost surely go down in history.

BROOKSVILLE SR. FFA
A DELICIOUS IDEA.

The best recruiting efforts often start with a single creative idea. Members of the Brooksville Sr. FFA Chapter at Hernando High School in Brooksville, Fla., certainly had a great idea when they decided to distribute 1,500 fortune cookies containing FFA information and fun facts to their schoolmates during lunch.

Chapter members met with key staff from the school cafeteria and the guidance counseling office, and together they hatched a plan to distribute the fortune cookies during their school’s two lunch periods.

Seventeen different messages were contained within the cookies, which were a hit with students. According to the Brooksville Sr. FFA advisor, interest in FFA showed a marked increase as a result of the clever marketing tactic.

You could say Brooksville Sr. FFA brought new meaning to “getting the word out” about FFA. And thanks to their efforts, the future of their chapter is looking brighter than ever, with good fortune – and additional members – on the horizon.

FAIRBURY FFA
HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE.

The University of Nebraska is home to one of the best football programs in the country, with five national championships and three Heisman trophies under its belt. But that didn’t stop Nebraska’s Fairbury FFA and its FFA alumni affiliate from challenging the Nebraska Cornhuskers to a friendly red-blue fundraiser basketball game.

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CLINTON CENTRAL FFA
NEVER TIRE OF RECYCLING.

It is always great when a project can help a community and raise funds for an FFA chapter at the same time. In this regard, the Clinton Central FFA tire-recycling initiative was a win-win event.

Located in rural Michigantown, Ind., where farmers and business owners go through lots of tires, Clinton Central FFA applied for a $3,000 grant to set up a recycling station. Their mission was to clean up the community while strengthening relationships among FFA, parents and community leaders.

Clinton Central FFA members filled out the grant application, and once it was approved, they distributed flyers to local businesses to spread the word.

On the big recycling day, three semitrailers parked in front of the Clinton Central Jr./Sr. High School as community members lined up to donate their used tires. FFA members helped set up skid loaders, and they filled all of the trailers full of tires in just two hours. The event was such a success that the chapter had to turn away several local farmers.

When the event was over, community members were eager to learn when the next tire-recycling day would arrive. The efforts of Clinton Central FFA saved farmers and businesses thousands of dollars in recycling fees and helped beautify the community – a win-win project indeed.

FREEDOM FFA
A SNACK ATTACK ON OBESITY.

Recent research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that approximately 12.5 million American children and adolescents aged 2-19 are obese. That number has tripled since 1980.

Getting young people to choose whole grains, vegetables and snacks with less sodium and sugar is a challenge in our country – but it is a challenge the Freedom FFA Chapter in Freedom, Wis., refused to ignore. Their goal: To fill their school’s milk/snack vending machine with 100 percent federally approved snacks during the 2010-11 school year.

Chapter members met with the school principal and food services director to request approval to add healthy snacks to the snack machine. When their request was approved, they added fruit juices, string cheese, baked potato chips and other healthy items to the snack machine. Six FFA members shared the duties of monitoring and refilling the vending machine throughout the year.

Their hope was to earn an additional $500 for their chapter each quarter. They exceeded their goal handily, earning $625 per quarter from sales of the healthy snacks.

Best of all, Freedom FFA helped their fellow students make better choices when their stomachs began growling for that midday snack – and hopefully instilled healthy eating habits that will stick with them for years to come.

LODI FFA
BUNCHES OF FUN.

Ninety miles east of Napa, Calif., tucked between Sacramento and Stockton, is the town of Lodi, where millions of grapes are grown and sold each year to top-producing wineries such as Beringer and Robert Mondavi.

Lodi FFA established a plan to get involved in the annual Lodi Grape Festival and Harvest Fair. Their hope was to increase the chapter’s membership while gaining knowledge of the local agricultural commodities.

FFA chapter officers decided to create three murals to display at the festival: an 8x12-foot mural depicting the community’s grape harvest and two 4x4-foot murals highlighting other local commodities.

Lodi FFA invited parents, FFA alumni, local farmers and community members to donate supplies for the murals. The response was overwhelming. In all, 30 volunteers helped with the donation of supplies – as well as the creation – of the murals.

At the festival, FFA members learned about the varieties of grapes and other commodities that are grown in the region. They also made contacts within the community that will help them with future career and leadership opportunities.

Meanwhile, their large grape mural received a Best of Show prize at the festival, and both commodity murals received first-place awards. Chapter members were rewarded with gift cards to Baskin-Robbins – a sweet ending to a most successful endeavor.
Owen Valley FFA members take pride in running their program like a business. In this spirit, the chapter holds a Fruit Extravaganza each year where they buy fruit at wholesale prices and sell it to the community.

In 2011, the chapter completed a business and marketing plan after studying fruit market trends. This helped them determine competitive pricing, develop a sales territory and decide how to order and distribute their fruit.

Students in the agricultural business class at Owen Valley High School in Spencer, Ind., determined who their major competitors were in the area by searching the Internet and phone books, as well as taking a survey of the client base.

The chapter vice president served as the chairman of Fruit Extravaganza, making the final selection of fruit vendors, securing a warehouse to store the product, and acquiring sales brochures and trucks for delivery.

Chapter members were given four weeks to take orders from customers. The Open Class Building at the Owen County Fairgrounds was used as their “warehouse,” and the Florida Fruit Association, McCartney Produce and Sysco were chosen as vendors.

In the end, the chapter finished with gross sales of $21,001.37 – a 17.9 percent increase in sales over the previous year. Now that’s how you run a business.

WILSON FFA
DIALING UP SUCCESS.

When Wilson FFA in Kansas needed to raise funds for their state convention and the State Leadership Conference for Chapter Leaders, they decided to reach out to their friends, families and community – via telephone. The only question was, Would it work?

The chapter launched an FFA Telefund phone marketing campaign with the goal of raising $1,500. The members formed a committee and created a Telefund script, a pledge form and thank-you notes in preparation for the event. The finance committee then created a list of FFA alumni, previous supporters, teachers and community members to be contacted. Finally, FFA members added names and phone numbers of their family members to the list.

The FFA Telefund campaign took place over two days at Wilson High School, with plenty of snacks on hand to provide fuel during long call sessions. In all, 171 phone calls were placed, 67 percent of which resulted in cash pledges. When the campaign ended, Wilson FFA had raised $3,555, exceeding their original goal by more than $2,000!

It turns out that the FFA Telefund phone marketing campaign was a good call after all.

OWEN VALLEY FFA
THE FRUITS OF LABOR.

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PONCHATOULA FFA
BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS.

Relationship-building activities are a part of many local, state and national FFA workshops and conferences. Ponchatoula FFA in Ponchatoula, La., decided to take their relationship building one step further by incorporating activities in which FFA members with special needs could participate.

Chapter members participated in a sensitivity training workshop to learn how to work with special-needs members. Agriscience and special education teachers partnered during the training, helping students gain a better understanding of how to work with the abilities and disabilities of special-needs students.

Ponchatoula FFA created several projects where all students could work collaboratively, including the established school-based enterprise The Special Treats Company, in which all members created, packaged and sold all-natural dog treats as a fundraiser. They also grew strawberries and vegetables in accessible raised-bed gardens, and then sold the produce. The money they earned was used to purchase FFA jackets for the students with special needs.

FFA members also partnered with special-needs students with obesity or other health problems, training them to compete in the local Special Olympics. Through these experiences, the students created friendships that transcend stereotypes and will last a lifetime.

WINONA FFA
WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE.

Each year, approximately 40,000 people receive a rabies prevention treatment called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) after being bitten by an animal. Many of these people live in locations where wildlife thrives.

Winona, Texas, is a rural community two hours east of Dallas. Lots of wildlife lives in this area, and where there’s wildlife, there’s a threat of rabies. So Winona FFA decided to provide a rabies clinic where people could bring their pets for free rabies vaccinations and community members could learn about the disease.

FFA members wisely scheduled the clinic to coincide with the Smith County Rabies Drive. Then they promoted the clinic throughout the town, posting signs in local businesses and sharing the news with friends and family. They also created pamphlets on rabies vaccinations, including information about the importance of spaying and neutering pets.

On the day of the clinic, pets (with their owners!) waited in line for vaccinations. A total of 98 dogs and cats received free rabies vaccinations. Additionally, 75 families were given informational pamphlets. In the end, the initiative succeeded in making the community a safer place while educating the public on an important public health issue.
As Americans have focused more on environmental conservation, rain barrels have grown in popularity in recent years. These simple containers collect and store rainwater from downspouts and rooftops for future use in watering gardens and lawns. Typically, a rain barrel is a large (usually at least 55 gallons) drum fitted with PVC couplings, a garden hose and a screen to block dirt and insects.

Wilson FFA in Wilson, Kan., wanted to launch an environmentally friendly project that would help conserve water while lowering water bills. Rain barrels seemed like the perfect fit, so the chapter decided to get to work building their own.

Rather than using new containers, the chapter built their barrels with recycled containers donated from Coca-Cola and the local Blue Beacon Car Wash. When the project was finished, 15 Wilson FFA members had constructed 91 rain barrels at the school ag shop. Community members bought 37 of the rain barrels at $10 each, and the remaining barrels were sold in neighboring communities to recoup the money spent on materials.

While they were building the rain barrels, each Wilson FFA member had a specific duty – and best of all, the boys got involved with the project.

“This has typically been an all-girl chapter team, but it was great to see the boys get excited about this,” Chapter President Emily Beneda said. “The guys loved helping use the saws to cut holes in the barrels, and they lifted each barrel and really worked as a team.”

Both the boys and girls impressed Wilson FFA Advisor Lindsey Huseman. “I am constantly amazed at the passion and drive that my students exhibit, especially for community service,” she said. “They are very aware of the needs of other students and individuals in the community and the entire world.

“Whether they are collecting shoes to send overseas or sharing agriculture with elementary students, they are making a difference.”

According to chapter member Ashley Zedenka, the project was a valuable learning experience in more ways than one. “Students learned proper techniques and safety for using a pipe wrench, a skill saw and more,” she said.

The success of their rain-barrel project is a proud achievement for the growing chapter. “Six years ago, the Wilson agricultural education program and FFA were non-existent,” Huseman said. “These members have worked to put agriculture back into the curriculum and Wilson FFA back on the map. Now, this chapter is an essential component of the school and community.”
BRIGGSDALE FFA
HANDCRAFTED FOR THE HOLIDAYS.

Most of us think of the holidays as an occasion to spend time with friends and family. But for some who live in assisted-living facilities, the holidays can be a lonely, and even depressing, time.

Briggsdale FFA in Colorado designed a plan to bring cheer to a nursing home in a nearby community by making special writing pens to give to residents during the holiday season.

The Senior Scribes project started out in agriculture mechanics class, where students drilled holes in slim blocks of wood called “pen blanks.” Then they glued pen tubes (which would eventually house the ink cartridges) in the holes. Next, a lathe was used to gouge off tiny chips of wood and shape the blanks into pen barrels. The newly formed pen barrels were then sanded and polished. After the pens were assembled using a pen press, the final step was to insert the ink cartridge. Students devoted more than 40 hours to the project.

One December day, Briggsdale FFA members distributed the pens at the Kenton Manor nursing home in Greeley, Colo. The members spent some quality time sharing stories with the residents and listening to their reminiscences.

Through this project, the chapter learned valuable skills in woodworking, and they learned an important life lesson too – that a small, handmade gift can make a big difference in someone else’s life, especially during the holidays.

GARRETSON FFA
HONORING LOCAL HISTORY.

Important stories are lost over time if no record of those events is left behind. Garretson FFA in Garretson, S.D., refused to let that happen in their community.

FFA members teamed up with the Garretson Historical Society to help renovate the basement of the Garretson Historical Society Museum, transforming it into a place to honor the town’s rich agricultural history.

With grant funds from the South Dakota Department of Agriculture, the historical society and Garretson FFA were able to build two new bookshelves and add bulletin boards, seed boxes and other items to display artifacts in the new agricultural area of the museum.

Eleven FFA members began the reconstruction with 30 hours of cleaning, repairing and hauling of garbage. Ten more members worked 56 hours on the construction and painting phase of the project, while eight members worked 16 hours arranging displays. Finally, 12 members worked 60 additional hours constructing displays for books, crop seeds and artifacts.

When the project was finished, six FFA members joined the historical society, where they now assist in demonstrations of antique tools during special open-house programs at the museum. Now that’s dedication to historical preservation.

LEHI FFA
WRANGLIN’ A COUNTRY BAND.

Thanksgiving Point, a family-oriented destination in Utah, is home to a 55-acre botanical garden, a working farm, a dinosaur museum, an art institute and one very large red barn. Lehi FFA decided to use that barn for a fundraising concert featuring the Bar J Wranglers, a popular country-western group that has played with the likes of Roy Rogers and Randy Travis.

Lehi FFA worked diligently to secure the 999-seat venue, and they partnered with the school’s choir to book the band. The Lehi community helped out too, offering several sponsorships to cover the costs of the band and barn rental. Businesses that couldn’t afford to give money pitched in by selling tickets and helping with other tasks.

In all, 65 percent of Lehi FFA members participated in the concert planning process. Their hard work paid off too – within one month after the concert was announced, ticket sales had nearly covered the cost of putting on the concert.

Not only did the Bar J Wranglers put on a great show, but their concert also provided an opportunity for two prestigious school organizations – the Lehi FFA and the Lehi Choir – to work together. An added bonus was inviting community leaders and sponsors to the concert so they could be recognized.

Give the Lehi FFA a standing ovation for organizing an event that brought their community together.
Statistics show that there are 925 million undernourished people in the world today. Causes of hunger include poor agricultural infrastructure, poverty, natural disasters, conflict and over-exploitation of the environment.

In an effort to be part of the solution to the hunger problem, Burlington FFA in Oklahoma implemented a plan of action to send food to hungry children. They started by contacting Kids Against Hunger, a national food-aid organization that packages and distributes meals for malnourished and starving children in the United States and more than 60 countries. Burlington FFA planned to host two Kids Against Hunger programs in 2010-11 to get students involved in a hands-on learning experience and community service.

Seventy-five percent of Burlington FFA members participated in the two Kids Against Hunger programs, learning management, planning and interpersonal skills through their involvement. They all helped package food kits, box the meals and prepare them for shipment to hungry children around the world.

In the end, the programs were so successful that Burlington FFA immediately planned a third. And while their efforts alone won’t end world hunger, somewhere, dozens of needy children are eating nutritious meals thanks to the efforts of Burlington FFA members.

The Richland 44 FFA Chapter in Colfax, N.D., wanted to come strong out of the gate, so they created a program called Outdoor Dreams. Their goal was to raise money for the Catch-A-Dream Foundation, which gives terminally ill children the hunting, fishing or outdoor vacation of their dreams.

But they didn’t stop there. The chapter also started a fundraiser for the Outdoor Adventure Foundation, which supports terminally ill children and disabled veterans. Richland 44 FFA kicked off their fundraiser by selling raffle tickets for drawings at home football and volleyball games, and they called on local farmers for soybeans to market at the Colfax Farmers Elevator. They also asked speakers from Catch-A-Dream and Outdoor Adventure Foundation to speak at school lyceums to raise interest in their efforts.

Richland 44 FFA exceeded their original fundraising goals, donating $3,500 to the Catch-A-Dream Foundation and $2,817 to the Outdoor Adventure Foundation. Upon presentation of the donations, a representative from the Outdoor Adventure Foundation praised the students for their hard work.
FLEMING COUNTY FFA
ELECTING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Fleming County FFA in Flemingsburg, Ky., sought to increase the number of voters in their community by having a voting awareness campaign in the form of a mock election at their school.

With the help of Fleming County Clerk Jarrod Fritz, 20 FFA members received poll training and helped prepare an educational video on how to choose a candidate and cast a ballot.

A mock list of candidates – with a mock list of policies – was established, and the school was divided into two precincts. Fleming County High School’s newscast, the Panther Eye, covered the “election,” which started as students got off their buses at 6:30 a.m. and ran until the end of their lunch periods.

A total of 690 students voted on Mock Election Day – 92 percent of the school’s enrollment. Members of the Fleming County FFA Chapter’s executive council managed the precinct sign-in sheets, the ticket printer and electronic voting machines.

The mock election gave students a chance to see how an election is organized and conducted while learning the importance of voting. And while none of the “mock candidates” were declared winners, Fleming County FFA deserves credit for putting on a winning event.

ST. AMANT FFA
SADDLE UP, PARTNER.

In 2010, St. Amant FFA in Louisiana wanted to reach out to children with special needs, and they wanted to do it in a fun, nontraditional way. They decided to work with the Robert Horse Farm to organize an event featuring a variety of horse-related activities, from horseback riding to horse-drawn carriage rides.

The agriculture teachers at St. Amant High School contacted the special education director at the Ascension Parish School Board to arrange a date for the event, and FFA members asked several local businesses to donate meals, drinks and other supplies for the occasion.

A special committee was formed to plan extra activities for children to do while waiting for their turn to ride. These activities included face painting, bubble chasing and a small-animal petting zoo.

In all, 120 children with special needs attended the special event. Every child, including those in wheelchairs, enjoyed a horseback ride or carriage ride. FFA members helped the children mount the horses and led them around the grounds.

Forty percent of the St. Amant FFA members participated in the program. And 100 percent of those students came away with a deep feeling of satisfaction – and a few new friends to boot.
LET’S ROCK AND ROLL.

Who said you should never give your teacher a rock as a gift?

Not the members of Wilson Central FFA in Lebanon, Tenn. For Teacher Appreciation Week, they collected 135 rocks, which they painted and presented to every teacher in the school.

The limestone rocks were gathered from all over the school campus. Students looked for rocks that were roughly four inches in diameter and flat on one side, so the teachers could use them as paperweights.

The Wilson Central FFA design team chose to paint the rocks blue and gold – the official FFA colors as well as Wilson Central school colors. When Teacher Appreciation Week arrived, the rocks were distributed in teachers’ mailboxes along with a bag of candy.

Guidance counselors, the front office staff and all principals received rocks too. All were impressed by the students’ resourcefulness and artistic vision. At the end of the day, everyone agreed that the efforts of the Wilson Central FFA truly, well, rocked.

Remember Care Bears? Bradley Central FFA is bringing them back.

Bradley Central High School in Cleveland, Tenn., is the home of the Bradley Bears, so Bradley Central FFA started a group called Care Bears to help people with special needs learn skills that they can use throughout their lives. The ultimate goal was to create activities that challenged special-needs adults, and possibly even lead them to a career path.

Bradley Central FFA formed a chapter cooperation committee that worked with a representative of Bradley/Cleveland Development Services to bring disabled adults to the school one day each week to work in the school greenhouse.

Eight people with special needs worked with FFA members to complete two landscaping projects on campus and two additional projects in the downtown area. They helped Bradley Central FFA grow 720 poinsettias, 42,300 bedding plants and 120 hanging baskets in the greenhouse, working a total of 160 hours. They also helped care for the chapter pets: a rabbit, a hamster and a guinea pig.

Bradley Central FFA members learned about safety awareness, communication skills and much more while helping their new friends. FFA members also assisted the adults in finding potential jobs in the Support Employment Program, perhaps using the horticulture skills they developed with the help of the Care Bears.
When the Bell Middle School FFA Chapter in Bell, Fla., was named the National Outstanding Middle School Chapter at the 2011 National FFA Convention, chapter vice president and middle schooler Audrey Powers took the stage to help accept the award.

“I was a little nervous being in front of thousands of people,” she said. “It was televised and everyone in my hometown was watching. But it made me feel really honored.”

What made the Bell Middle School FFA shine so brightly? In short, commitment and follow-through, along with a healthy dose of compassion.

Hannah Hurst, current chapter president, described one of the many community activities the chapter participated in last year. “We visited elderly people at the Medic Ayers Nursing Center,” Hurst explained. “We baked and decorated cookies for them, and then we spent the afternoon with them playing games.”

Chapter Reporter Dillon Paulling described how chapter members also conducted a local road cleanup. “The road by our school is used a lot, and every year we adopt it,” he said. “We start at one end and go to the other, cleaning up every piece of litter.”

During a popular chapter development activity, Bell Middle School FFA members visited Bell Elementary School to present the chapter development lesson International Candy Bar. They gave students bite-sized candy bars, explaining how most of the ingredients used to make the candy come from other countries. They also took the opportunity to promote FFA to kids who were about to take the leap to Bell Middle School, using famous people who were once FFA members as examples to inspire their younger counterparts.

And during FFA Week, as one of their student development activities, Bell Middle School FFA members hosted a breakfast for the school’s faculty and staff. The teachers and staff were greeted by the aromas of coffee, freshly baked biscuits and other nutritious and healthy foods that FFA members had prepared to show their appreciation for the support they receive throughout the year.

Bell Middle School FFA Advisor Debbie Jones summed up the chapter: “We have an unbelievable group of kids who have a lot of support from their parents and the community.

“When we won for Outstanding Middle School, our community put up banners on both ends of town,” she said. “That’s how involved we are in the community. People are proud.”
Follow the developmental process outlined in the 2012-2016 National Chapter Award Program handbook, which is online at www.FFA.org. Identify measurable and realistic goals. Develop an educational plan that meets the chapter’s goals. Evaluate the results and member benefits. Include information on how the activity affected members, the chapter, the school and the community.

Include facts about the percentage of members that participated and accomplishments.

Keep a file of activities and notes on areas for improvement within each activity. Students can use this information for Program of Activities planning.

Take note of ideas that spring to mind when completing the application. Jot down these ideas to use during the next POA planning session.

Ask an English teacher or someone you trust to edit your application. They’ll learn more about FFA, and you will submit a better application.

Don’t attach information or materials not requested. Points may be deducted or an application may be disqualified for including supplementary materials not specifically requested in the application.

Review the application checklist. Follow the instructions carefully. Please use the FFA award application folder as loose pages may be lost.
EIGHT STEPS TO DEVELOPMENT.

Award-winning FFA chapters develop a strong Program of Activities, which emerges from a process and structure involving every member in setting chapter goals. Once the goals are set, activities are planned and carried out.

1. Organize standing, executive and special committees to address areas of student, chapter and community interest and development. Each member serves on at least one committee.

2. Each committee identifies goals and activities related to its purpose/area.

3. Committees present their selected activities, including estimated income and costs, to the entire chapter.

4. Approved activities and a combined chapter calendar of events are published in a written Program of Activities and distributed to members.

5. Committees and sub-committees develop detailed plans for each activity.

6. Members implement the plans.

7. Committees report results and evaluate the activities. They prepare written final reports for each activity, noting costs, income, accomplishments and recommendations.

8. Chapter leaders refer to the POA and its results to prepare an application for the National Chapter Award program.
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