

2012 FFA CHAPTER INNOVATORS' GUIDE

Success Stories from Model of Innovation and Model of Excellence
Award-Winning Chapters and the Outstanding Middle School Chapter



INNOVATE



MODELS FOR SUCCESS

Read how these 45 FFA chapters developed a well-planned and well-executed Program of Activities.





CONGRATULATIONS

National Model of Innovation Winners

Like you, we believe in the future of agriculture.

That's why we're proud to be the National FFA Foundation's longest-running sponsor. Feeding a growing global population requires leadership, critical-thinking skills and collaboration – traits FFA chapters teach every day.

John Deere and FFA – working together since 1943 to prepare the next generation of agricultural leaders.



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 & 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 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 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.

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 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.

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 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 Excellence Award, the Model of Innovation Awards and the National Outstanding Middle School Chapter Award for 2012 are presented in this guide along with their unique stories about how they pursued and accomplished their goals.

BEST *of the* BEST



Model of Excellence Winner and Finalists

Aiken FFA of South Carolina
Eldon FFA of Missouri
Lawrence County FFA of Alabama
Marshall FFA of Missouri
Marysville FFA of Ohio
Ponchatoula FFA of Louisiana
Ridgemont FFA of Ohio
Southmont FFA of Indiana
Spencer County FFA of Kentucky
Versailles FFA of Ohio

Model of Innovation Winners and Finalists

Student

Aiken FFA of South Carolina
Brooksville Sr. FFA of Florida
Central FFA of Virginia
Hutchinson FFA of Minnesota
Kamiakin FFA of Washington
Red Wing FFA of Minnesota
Ridgemont FFA of Ohio
Rosewood FFA of North Carolina
Southeast of Saline FFA of Kansas
Vinita FFA of Oklahoma

Chapter

Chillicothe FFA of Missouri
Cushing FFA of Oklahoma
Flippin FFA of Arkansas
Jefferson FFA of West Virginia
Loyal FFA of Wisconsin
Mineral County FFA of West Virginia
Ponchatoula FFA of Louisiana
Ridgemont FFA of Ohio
Spencer County FFA of Kentucky
Yelm FFA of Washington



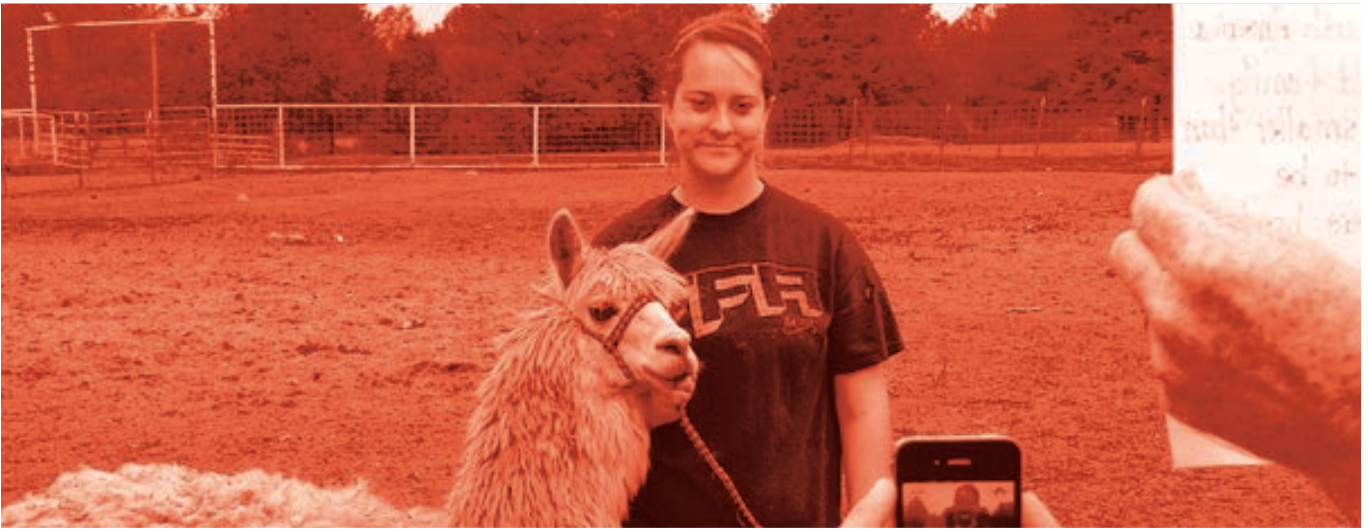
Community

Elton FFA of Louisiana
Lawrence County FFA of Alabama
Milford FFA of Delaware
Ponchatoula FFA of Louisiana
Ridgemont FFA of Ohio
Southeast Bulloch FFA of Georgia
Shenandoah FFA of Indiana
Stanley-Boyd FFA of Wisconsin
Tri-Valley FFA of New York
Wilson FFA of Kansas

Outstanding Middle School Winner and Finalists

Beverly Manor Middle FFA of Virginia
Chatham Middle FFA of Virginia
Creeside Junior FFA of Louisiana
Fifth Ward Junior FFA of Louisiana
Screven County Middle FFA of Georgia

TABLE OF *CONTENTS*



6 MODEL OF EXCELLENCE

MODEL OF INNOVATION

12 STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

18 **CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT**

24 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

30 **OUTSTANDING MIDDLE SCHOOL CHAPTER**



INVESTING IN MEMBERS TURNS FRESHMEN INTO LEADERS

MODEL OF EXCELLENCE WINNER: SPENCER COUNTY FFA

This year's Model of Excellence winner has figured out its chapter's formula for success, and it's all about involvement. Spencer County FFA of Kentucky focused on its members this year, and it paid off.

"Find activities that both the community and students are interested in," FFA advisor Darryl Matherly said. "Everything should be helping the students in some way and interesting to the FFA members in general. If you keep that in mind, you're going to be successful."

Never, ever forget the importance of freshmen, Matherly added.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIRST YEAR

With Freshman Focus Activities, Spencer County FFA dedicated resources to new students making the transition from middle school to high school. Matherly said this time was critical in supporting new members and retaining them for the rest of their high school careers.

"If you don't give them something to be involved in, they'll gravitate to something else," Matherly said. "If you get freshman excited, the next thing you know, their sophomore year they're coordinating events. And then junior and senior year they're officers coming up with new ideas

and recruiting people."

The recreation committee organized a freshman-focused event each month. Events included a cornhole contest and a trip to the Kentucky State Fair. More than 95 percent of all freshmen took part in at least one activity. Freshmen were also paired with executive leaders who could guide them through the anxieties of the first year of high school.

The North American Livestock Exposition was one event that many freshmen took part in. They gave tours to young people who weren't exposed to agriculture. The freshmen wore their FFA jackets and were able to share their growing knowledge.

SPREAD THE LEADERSHIP LOVE

One of the chapter's most popular events, the Chili for Charity cook off, is organized and led by different members from year to year.

FFA members brought in 32 pots of chili and organized musical entertainment during the event. Guests paid to attend and could donate money or toys for local charities. More than 300 people attended. They raised \$288 for the local Angel Tree charity and collected 167 gifts for the local Toys for Tots campaign.

To advertise, the PR committee ran an ad in the paper two weeks prior to

the event, made announcements at the school and emailed all the teachers in the district.

"Who doesn't love to eat chili?" junior and chairman Caleb Fulkerson asked. "That's the greatest way to gather people in the community: through food and donating money to a cause that helps the community at the holidays."

GET STUDENTS MOVING

Everyone hears that young people love sitting at home on the computer or watching TV. Spencer County FFA wanted to break that stereotype and get their members out and moving while learning about agriculture. They organized Agriculture Olympics with 10 events—think feed sack races, fence post tossing and hay stacking.

To promote the event, some members dressed as "hillbillies" while signing up teams. A teacher team even got involved.

"I've gone the past three years, and every year I've competed with a different team, which helps me branch out to different friend groups and connect with different people," Tyler Goodlett, junior and student advisor, said. "Some kids don't spend as much time outside, and they get to come out. It's great for team building and meeting new friends."



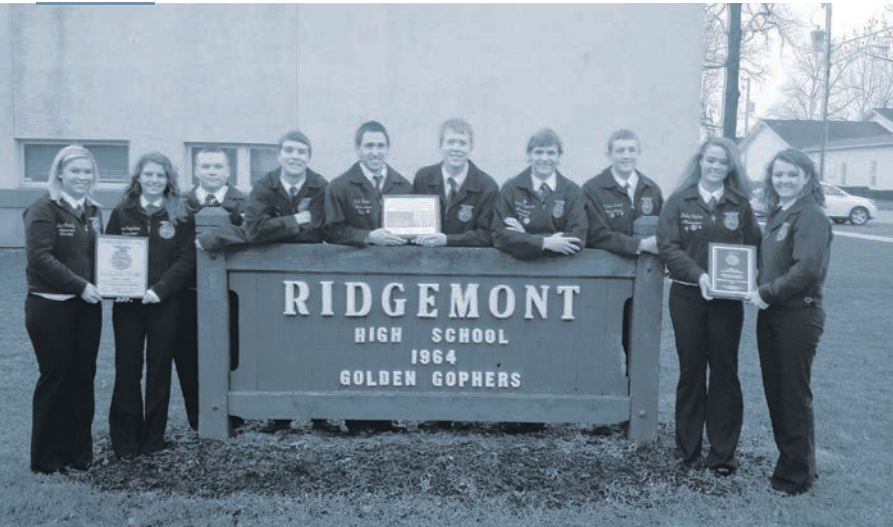
*IF YOU DON'T GIVE
THEM SOMETHING
TO BE INVOLVED IN,*
**THEY'LL
GRAVITATE
TO SOMETHING
ELSE.**

— Darryl Matherly, FFA Advisor

The goal of Freddy Farmer's Fun Farm was to educate students ages 10 and under about the various parts of agriculture. In the most recent U.S. Census Bureau report that tracks the fastest growing counties in the nation by percent growth, Spencer County was in the top 100 overall. Thus the need for agricultural awareness is apparent, and the Spencer County FFA decided to make agricultural awareness fun for students.

In 2007 it was estimated that 26.6 percent of Americans were at the level of being considered obese. During the last few years it seems that the number has remained at a high level, and in some cases obesity has even reached teenagers who seem to now spend less time engaged in physical activity. Spencer County FFA decided to become involved in promoting physical activity through conducting an Agriculture Olympics activity. The event was designed to get members physically engaged and exercise.

INNOVATE



Ridgemont FFA members pose with their recent awards.

KNOWLEDGE ACROSS THE YEARS RIDGEMONT FFA

Ridgemont FFA in Ridgeway, Ohio, takes steps to ensure the well-being of its students. The chapter sponsored Buzz Free Prom, which included after-prom activities and door prizes to encourage juniors and seniors to stay safe while not drinking and driving on prom night.

The youth is important to the health of any FFA chapter, and Ridgemont invested in its students early by hosting a Recruitment Bonfire Meeting and inviting interested eighth graders. The event included a haunted trail and time for current and future members to meet and bond.

Targeting the younger crowd, Ridgemont reached out to elementary school kids through its Mac-A-Chee Farm Safety 4 Just Kids program to teach kids about how to be careful on a farm. The Food For America program for third graders featured stations set up throughout a farm that tied together science, math, English and social studies with farm work. Other programs taught local students about recycling, gardening and conserving energy.

TUTOR TIME PONCHATOULA FFA

College applications are one of the most intimidating aspects of leaving high school. The Ponchatoula FFA in Louisiana conducted a workshop to assist senior members in completing their applications and created teams of tutors to help in the process.

They took that mentality of support into the community by sharing the love on Valentine's Day with 45 disadvantaged senior citizens living in the town. All chapter members created Valentine's cards and packed gift boxes full of homegrown strawberries dipped in chocolate.

For all age groups, the chapter helped develop a bi-monthly farmers market for local farmers and FFA members to sell their produce and products while encouraging the community to buy locally.

For the environment, members teamed with a wetland specialist to plant more than 2,000 wetland trees in high-erosion areas.



Ponchatoula FFA members test water quality.



Over 20 elementary-aged students participated with the Versailles FFA in the first-ever Greenhouse Open House's interactive kids' program. They learned the process of germination and could plant their own flower for Mother's Day.

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

VERSAILLES FFA

Hunting is a big part of life in Versailles, Ohio, and the Versailles FFA Safety Committee sponsored a Hunter Safety Education Meeting for students and parents. Hunting and wildlife professionals spoke on a variety of topics that included issues such as the physical and mental well-being of hunters.

Fundraising was extremely successful this year, as fruit, meat and peanut sales in October through December brought in \$42,910. To raise money for scholarships that support FFA members, the chapter and alumni affiliate hosted the 18th Annual Soup & Sandwich Social during basketball games.

To help in the community, the chapter grew a Living to Serve Community Garden, and all produce raised was donated to those in need. Local preschoolers helped during the summer to learn about serving others and the basics of gardening. On a global level, members learned about world hunger and raised \$3,000 to support Heifer International.

STARTING, BUILDING, CEMENTING RELATIONSHIPS

SOUTHMONT FFA

At the beginning of the year, this Crawfordsville, Ind., chapter was all about recruitment and spreading the word about the good work FFA does. When the school year began, the chapter focused on recruitment with a bring-a-



friend ice cream social. In October, there was a pumpkin-carving party also aimed to bring in new members.

Throughout the year, the Southmont FFA cleaned up a sponsored two-mile stretch of a local highway, collecting an average of 17 bags of trash so that garbage didn't further pollute the environment. In spring, members volunteered to help landscape the local fire station and post office to enhance the natural beauty of the community.

When it was time to celebrate the end of another successful school year, the chapter took a canoe trip and picnicked on Sugar Creek. The trip along eight miles of the creek was physical, fun, and helped students cement the relationships they had built during the year.

SUCCESS IN SELF-WORTH

ELDON FFA

The Eldon FFA of Missouri did a masterful job of focusing on student attitudes, feelings of self-worth and career confidence. Through activities such as a college and career fair and a game night that promoted student well-being, the chapter encouraged students to be in strong mental shape.

Students were rewarded through scholarships, namely the \$36,000 in agriculture scholarships given to college-bound seniors last year.

The members took what they'd been given and invested it back in the community by adopting a local highway, selling supermarket coupon books to a local store and gathering canned food items to donate to the Eldon Community Food Bank.

The support didn't stop at the Missouri border. During Operation Military Pride, members sent care packages to community alumni serving in the military overseas, which encouraged thoughtfulness and good citizenship among members.



Each year Southmont FFA officers work in cooperation with the Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District to host a Conservation Field Day program for all county fourth graders. The chapter is responsible for conducting the "Incredible Journey" station at which the fourth graders play a game simulating a water molecule's travel through the water cycle.

This activity is the "Get High on Life" activity where Eldon FFA members set up a booth to promote agriculture and FFA to middle school students. The goal is to recruit more members into the chapter from this activity.



These Horticulture I students are laying out the garden with a string and tape measure to ensure the row of squash is planted correctly. Bell peppers are planted beside the squash. Aiken FFA members utilize drip irrigation to water as summers can reach 100 degrees during the day.

LETTING TALENT SHINE THROUGH

AIKEN FFA

The Aiken FFA in South Carolina had a successful year with 125 students and 100 percent involvement in FFA programs and activities. They grew a chapter and school garden, adopted a stretch of local highway, and helped with the Special Olympics.

They fundraised with Community Greenhouse plant sales. Members had the opportunity to attend local, state and national leadership workshops to develop leaders within their chapter.

This year was their first-ever “Evening of Arts,” which highlighted student talent in the performance arts. Horticulturalists and floral arrangers also showed off their creations and sold pieces alongside student artwork. The event boosted student confidence and showed the community the talents of their local FFA members.

SCHOOLYARD BOUNTY

MARYSVILLE FFA

Not every school farm boasts rabbits, chickens, a greenhouse, and 120 acres of corn, beans and wheat. The Marysville FFA of Ohio benefitted from these facilities by letting members work the land, plant soybeans and market their beans, animals and flowers to buyers while raising money for chapter activities.

Beyond the school garden is a world of agriculture and learning that the students discovered by touring six farms around the county. This year, the chapter visited nearby farms including a cattle and egg production facility.

Hoping to excite a younger generation about the importance of agriculture in their communities, members developed lessons and visited local elementary schools to speak with fifth graders as part of the Food For America program. More than 400 fifth graders learned about agriculture and food in the community.



Marysville FFA member Justin Holland instructs a youngster to rope cattle during Agricultural Fest.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

MARSHALL FFA

Everything is about the minutes and numbers for Marshall FFA in Missouri. In the Fitness For All event, members tracked the minutes when they were physically active over two weeks, then tried to increase that number of minutes over the next two weeks.

Record keeping became a competition when the chapter challenged each other to keep accurate records of money. A local Kiwanis Club judged the books and awarded prizes for the most detailed and accurate ledgers.

They put that money management experience to good use during the Poinsettia Sale. After growing 550 poinsettia plants, members set prices, developed a marketing plan and tracked sales to ensure a profit was made. Other projects focused on giving back to the community through agricultural presentations and a used shoe drive that donated shoes to a local nonprofit group.



Marshall FFA members participate in a Fitness For All event.



EYE FOR AN EYE

LAWRENCE COUNTY FFA

Lawrence County FFA in Moulton, Ala., came up with a creative way to teach eye safety awareness. The high school student body was given eye patches to wear, simulating blindness in one eye. Soon, students felt the discomfort and headache of having only one working eye, which served as a vivid reminder of the importance of wearing safety goggles while operating machines and working with chemicals.

To serve the community, the chapter created artificial housing for the wood duck population on the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. Not only did members learn how to identify different types of waterfowl, they constructed more than 100 wood duck boxes and learned about the waterfowl's habitat and environment.

Just as powerful is the feeling of competition during one of the South's biggest football rivalry events: the Alabama versus Auburn food drive. Members used that competition to fuel food donations that benefitted food-insecure families in the community.

Lawrence County FFA members simulate blindness in one eye from a work-related injury to encourage using proper safety equipment.

WHERE R U?

R U OK?

REPLICATE THIS
ACTIVITY AT YOUR
CHAPTER

Use materials you have on hand like cones and tires. A modified golf cart or go-cart could work. Make sure to check local regulations.

Partner with a local organization that could bring in guest speakers or safety officials.

Have students research and put together statistics.

Allow willing students to sign a pledge not to text and drive.

VINITA FFA

Students hear it all the time—be careful with your phone, don't text and drive, and keep your eyes on the road. But it's not until they experience the risks firsthand that it becomes real.

"Texting is a huge part of our lives and our generation," chapter president Hanna Minson said. "If you're in a hurry, you send a quick text. But we care so much about our chapter, and we wanted to spread the message that texting while driving can wait."

A healthy lifestyle is more than working out and eating right—it's protecting your safety through the choices you make, Minson said.

Using a go-cart and cell phones, students at Vinita High School had to navigate an obstacle course while trying to text on their phones. Even a simple "Hi!" and "I'm on my way!" were difficult for students as they attempted to drive around cones and stay in the boundaries.

"The students used their own phones so they were comfortable," FFA advisor Carolyn Piguet said. "They had to circulate through the cones rapidly. There was no room for distraction or else they would drive by a cone or drive over it."

This made it apparent that they couldn't take their eyes away from what they were doing."

Thirty-five students participated in the half-day workshop, which was aimed at freshmen and sophomores who were just beginning to drive. None of the students could navigate through the course without hitting a cone or going out of bounds while texting.

Eighty-two percent of teens ages 16-17 own cell phones, and at least 23 percent of auto collisions in 2011 involved cell phones. That's 1.3 million crashes. These and other statistics about the perils of texting while driving really brought home the importance of the safety activity, senior and chapter vice president Tim Taylor said.

The ideal age to talk about driving safety, Taylor added, is as sophomores become old enough to get their permits and driver's licenses.

"For some, it's the first chance to have freedom and responsibility," he said. "Even though they have that freedom, they have to take it seriously because one 'behind the wheel' could be life or death."

Taylor took photos during the event and participated in the discussion afterward. Students signed a pledge that they wouldn't text while driving. This year, to modify the event, the chapter will print smaller copies of the pledge and attach them to a lanyard so members can hang them in their car mirrors. The dangling signatures are a reminder of their friends and the promise to drive with their full attention on the road ahead.

... WE WANTED TO SPREAD THE MESSAGE
THAT TEXTING WHILE DRIVING CAN WAIT.

—Hanna Minson, Vinita FFA President



Vinita FFA members simulate distracted and impaired driving to influence members to make smart decisions behind the wheel.

INNOVATE



Aiken FFA members sang a duet during their performance at Evening of the Arts. This opportunity allows for students to grow personally by overcoming stage fright as well as building confidence for other skills.

TALENT SHOWCASE AIKEN FFA

An Evening of the Arts event showcased talents such as dancing, singing and guitar playing from members of the Aiken FFA of South Carolina.

In addition to the performances, members put on floral arrangement demonstrations, taught about horticultural plants grown in greenhouses and displayed their artwork.

Not only was this year the first time the chapter or the school had seen an evening arts show, the event was a crowd-pleasing success. The chapter sold 450 tickets, raising \$1,800 that went to a scholarship fund. Artwork sold for \$4 and floral arrangements for \$15, which went back to the student who created the piece.

Members told their chapter advisors they had been nervous about performing in front of a large audience but gained courage and forged ahead. The chapter saw 95 percent involvement from members and hopes to make this an annual event.

DOG HEAVEN BROOKSVILLE SR. FFA

Man's best friend was a featured guest at Brooksville Sr. FFA in Florida. Five dogs from a local Animal Control Services were brought in to entry-level veterinary assistant classes.

Students learned about dog breeds and then were able to participate in the grooming and care of the dogs. While the students enjoyed learning about the nonverbal communication between humans and dogs, the dogs themselves were given a second chance as they had been scheduled for euthanasia due to space limitations.

All the activities occurred under the watch of a certified dog trainer, and the dogs were vaccinated and spayed or neutered. Members learned about safe handling and the proper care of pups.

Students held a graduation ceremony for both animals and handlers at the completion of the program, and 99 percent of students enrolled in the classes participated in the training of the dogs. The group plans to expand the program in the future.



Brooksville FFA members are educated in the proper methods of efficiently rotating animals being groomed to maximize workspace and create an atmosphere of cooperation.



More than 30 members presented a fishing clinic to 40 sixth grade students. Members created presentations on fishing equipment, techniques, fish habitat, food safety and lures.

GONE FISHIN'

CENTRAL FFA

There's no better way to learn and reaffirm a skill than by passing it on to a younger generation. Central FFA in Woodstock, Va., taught 40 sixth graders lessons about fishing, the environment and developing relationships.

By creating a lesson plan of 10 segments that each lasted eight minutes, members shared their knowledge in a rotation that took 90 minutes. Then the members and young students took their newly learned skills to a private pond.

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries provided poles and equipment so the students could spend an hour fishing. At a luncheon afterward, the committee chair led participants in a discussion of their experiences.

After the younger students left, members shared their ideas about developing relationships, delivering presentations and working with young people.

B-I-N-G-O!

HUTCHINSON FFA

The game of BINGO isn't all about gaming halls and red and white dots. The Hutchinson FFA of Minnesota turned the popular game into a way to motivate their peers to think about physical, mental and spiritual health.

Members kicked off excitement for the game by competing in student-versus-teacher physical and mental challenges during the school pepfest. Eventually, 491 students and staff submitted their completed BINGO cards and winners were drawn during the four weeks of the program.

By getting the community and 12 businesses involved, the chapter awarded 15 staff and student prizes with values between \$15 and \$50.



Participants learned free and healthy ways to improve their lives by building relationships, staying active and reducing stress.

A HORSE, OF COURSE

KAMIAKIN FFA

A great way to discover nature is by sitting in a saddle, Kamiakin FFA in Kennewick, Wash., discovered. This year, students benefitted by learning skills in horse handling and about natural resources and plant wildlife species identification.

In a relaxed, positive and fun setting, students took pre-event exams on forest conservation and horse safety. A total of 28 students signed up to take the trip, which toured the Wenatchee National Forest by horseback.

Eighty percent of those who attended could show their competency in using forestry tools. Students rode the horses and then stopped to collect random wildlife samples using hoops, a tape measure and a digital hanging scale.

By communicating and working with the horses while learning, the students focused on their own sense of self-worth, confidence and ability to learn in new settings.

A pepfest was held by Hutchinson FFA for the school to kick off a month of healthy lifestyle choices. One part of the pepfest included a staff-versus-students challenge course.



Students rode through open range as well as stands of trees during a Kamiakin FFA event. Tip Hudson explained the difference between even and uneven age stands.



Red Wing FFA members distribute fruit in Locker Bay.

SPREADING THE BOUNTY

RED WING FFA

Pounds of food are thrown away every day because they are just past their expiration dates. Instead of letting this still-edible food go to waste, the Red Wing FFA of Minnesota came up with an innovative way to spread resources to those who most need them.

In an alliance with Live Healthy Red Wing, the chapter received just-past-expiration food and prepared and distributed the fruits and vegetables to students at the end of the school day.

With the advice of the school nurse, the distributors targeted students who stayed after school to study, who are active in sports and activities, and who have difficult financial or medical needs.

More than 30 members contributed at least 40 hours preparing food for the program, which aided 40 percent of the school. This creative solution ensured that instead of going to waste, past-prime food could still benefit those in need.

WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES

RIDGEMONT FFA

Here's a tough topic addressed in an attention-grabbing way: men walking in women's high-heeled shoes to raise awareness of gender-based violence. That's what Ridgemont FFA of Ridgeway, Ohio, sponsored with its "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" event to address high rates of rape, sexual assault and gender violence.

During this three-hour event, 90 men put on pairs of pumps and made pledges to raise money and awareness of women living in violent situations. The presentation was eye-catching, and the topic at hand was treated with care and concern.

On the day of the event, the school held a one-hour assembly where domestic violence survivors and family resource organizations informed students of the statistics and realities of sexualized abuse.

On the last lap of the mile, 100 percent of students joined the men on the track to represent unity in the fight against domestic violence. The walkers raised more than \$3,500 to support a local women's shelter.



Ridgemont FFA members "walk a mile in her shoes" to raise awareness of gender-based violence and support a local women's shelter.

CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

ROSEWOOD FFA

The crops might be different in Japan, but the importance of agriculture to the country is not. At Rosewood FFA in Goldsboro, N.C., members learned this firsthand when they hosted the Future Farmers of Japan for six days and saw the Japanese students experience teenage American life.

Not only did the Japanese students attend classes and share their experiences with agriculture in the East, they learned about American agriculture by visiting local sites, businesses and farms.

Host families cared for their guests, and students spoke with local media outlets about the experience.

Approximately 250 history and agriculture students learned from the Japanese students who spoke to their classes about the global reach of agriculture. Students learned about time management, hospitality and respect for other cultures.



Rosewood FFA members hosted members from the Future Farmers of Japan.



CALORIES, COST AND HEALTHY CHOICES

SOUTHEAST OF SALINE FFA

At a high school sporting event, it's easy to grab for the nachos, hot dogs and candy. The Southeast of Saline FFA of Kansas wanted to offer the crowd delicious and healthy alternatives at their concession stand cooperative.

At volleyball, wrestling, basketball and junior high football games, a class of students set menu prices, arranged the work schedule, and managed inventory of the stand. This year, they added healthier options based on a survey of 60 student food preferences.

Data was a big part of the success of the project. Not only did they research student preferences, they compared cost and calories to give customers a complete picture of their choices.

Members researched nutritional information to take off or substitute the unhealthiest items from the menu. Then they offered new, lower-calorie options such as trail mix, yogurt and chocolate milk.

Running inventory and managing a first-in, first-out method of inventory management is huge to keep products fresh, Southeast of Saline FFA members learned.

BRINGING HOME THE BACON

REPLICATE THIS ACTIVITY AT YOUR CHAPTER

Look up food regulations from the department of agriculture.

Research local food processing and visit a plant if you aren't able to participate in a program of your own.

Look at nearby technical institutes for equipment and classes.

MINERAL COUNTY FFA

The Mineral County FFA of West Virginia raised and processed 24 hogs to create a delicious, locally grown, smoked and cured treat the community can't find anywhere else.

"You can't just drive to Walmart to get this," FFA advisor Charles Bennett said. "It's a specialty."

In planning the activity, the group set a goal of raising \$20,000 for its supervised agricultural experience program. They exceeded their goal and raised more than \$23,000 by purchasing, raising, processing, storing and curing 24 hogs.

Nearly 200 buyers registered for the auction. They purchased two hogs to raise for chapter-related activities and processed 24 hogs for the event.

"The students learned the responsibility of the whole process—getting that product to the consumer from the time they own that pig till the time it's sold," Bennett said.

Participating members raised a hog for 60 days, learning about meat processing from the very start. They kept logbooks of their progress and learned specifics that would help them in any food-related agriculture job. For example, they learned about legal regulations and also about marketing a good product.

Will Woodworth, a junior and the Ham & Bacon Committee Chair said hands-on learning was helpful for his agriculture knowledge.

"I learned how to properly cut up, process and country-cure hams and bacons," he said. "I

also learned about processing the loin into roast and chops, and the shoulder into sausage."

Before selling their products, members attended a workshop by Koch Industries to learn about marketing pork products and the ways value-added products can increase revenue.

When the hogs were processed, it was time for a social event and auction. During the social event, members served bacon and ham for guests to sample.

Although the food science program has been around Mineral County since the 1970s, the workshop idea tied together food science, community outreach and fundraising motives.

This year, the activity came at a time when the school was updating its food processing equipment. Mineral County Technical Center was updating its food processing equipment, and upgrades included a large smoker. Bennett said this program was a chance to show administrators the value of the new tools.

For the members, there's the benefit of hands-on experience and the pride of seeing a product created from beginning to end.

Timmy Nester, a junior who serves as president, raised one of the hogs at home. He was enrolled in a meat and science class, and said he learned more about the legal requirements of food science.

"I had raised a hog before," Nester said, "but this activity helped me be able to market a better product and talk to people about it and the process. You need to be up on top of regulations from the department of agriculture and know what a safe product is."



Mineral County FFA members display value-added products to increase profits.

A chapter member sets a smoking program learned during the Koch workshop.

Evaluating pork carcasses ensure a quality product.



*YOU
CAN'T
JUST
DRIVE
TO
WALMART
TO GET
THIS.
IT'S A
SPECIALTY.*

— Charles Bennett,
FFA Advisor



INNOVATE



The Chillicothe FFA chapter fundraiser event consisted of members going out into the community and offering their services and skills to earn money for the chapter.

BARNWARMING FOR FUNDRAISING

CHILICOTHE FFA

The Chillicothe FFA of Missouri knows how to work. Its members went out into the community to raise money by fulfilling jobs people needed done around the house and farm.

Members raked leaves, washed cars, moved furniture and cut wood to raise money for last year's chapter activities.

A little healthy competition spurred them on. Each class tried to earn the most money per student, and the totals were tallied for a "Barnwarming" award dance. The seniors won the event by raising an average of \$320.99 per class member. Their representative king and queen were crowned, but the victory was shared by all.

With a total of \$29,259.04, the chapter exceeded its fundraising goal by more than \$10,000. The bigger payoff, however, came in the strengthened connection to the community through acts of service.

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABOUT IT!

CUSHING FFA

Like good reporters and writers, Cushing FFA of Oklahoma spent time and energy learning how to craft a message and share it far and wide. This year, a major chapter activity focused on the all-important role of the chapter reporter.

By working with the Oklahoma State University Agricultural Education and Agricultural Communications departments, the chapter organized a workshop to benefit reporters from FFA chapters across the state. In all, 86 FFA members from 36 different chapters soaked up discussions about reporting, scrapbooking and information gathering.

Specific skills such as writing thank you notes and autobiographies showed students the value of details when it comes to communication.

Participants paid \$30 to cover their food, a folder of information, T-shirt and flash drive. Miss Oklahoma even stopped in to give a presentation.



FFA members attend a Cushing FFA event geared to broaden chapter reporter skills.

SCHOOLED IN SOCIAL MEDIA

FLIPPIN FFA

Flippin FFA in Arkansas knows how to reach and teach an audience. Members filmed 26 YouTube videos with 32 chapter members who gave lessons about livestock and animal care as well as information on the FFA motto and Creed.

Members designed QR Code posters that were used in the Arkansas State Fair Ag in Action Center, sponsored by the Arkansas FFA Association. Posters were displayed on animal pens, and when a visitor scanned the code, they could watch a video describing that animal and offering helpful information.

And because everything that involves students needs to have a Facebook tie-in, the codes also linked to the chapter's Facebook page and the state association's website.

The use of social networking and technology allowed members to reach new audiences and promote their research and hard work.



Flippin FFA members create posters with QR codes to educate about agriculture.



A LOCAL SWEET TREAT

JEFFERSON FFA

There's usually a lot of labor behind something that seems simply delicious. Jefferson FFA in Shenandoah Junction, W. Va., can tell you that behind 295 gallons of spiced, sweet apple butter are 144 bushels of apples and hours of cutting, washing, peeling and coring apples.

The annual fundraiser meant hours of after-school apple prep, and then a full Saturday of stirring the spiced butter. Students from other FFA chapters helped, along with parents, community members and alumni.

When it came time to sell, FFA members and the community pitched in to offload the sweet treat.

The Jefferson chapter made about \$5,000 from the sale, which will be used to fund trips, contests and officer team needs. Finding hungry mouths for the butter wasn't too hard—the community looks forward to the sale each year and the delicious local product sells out fast.

Jefferson FFA members produced 295 gallons of apple butter that was sold to fund chapter activities.



Loyal FFA also hosts an Ag Day for elementary students as part of a large community service project.

WE'RE ROLLING LOYAL FFA

You're on! Loyal FFA of Wisconsin learned the ins and outs of broadcast with a bi-weekly "Loyal FFA Today" news show that ran from October through March. The show highlighted FFA happenings and events and featured interviews and news stories.

Six members participated in each taping. They learned skills for camera use, editing, sound and teleprompter control. Each member was cross-trained on all equipment in case someone couldn't show up to a taping.

To begin each show, the officer opening ceremony was played. The rest of the show played out like a television news program—members typed up news stories, conducted interviews, anchored the show and ran a teleprompter. One interviewee was a state FFA officer.

When the show ran on a local station, community members saw the commitment and breadth of activities happening in their local FFA. Members, in turn, learned valuable artistic and technical skills.

LESSONS IN DIGGING PONCHATOULA FFA

Ponchatoula FFA of Louisiana had two goals in mind when it created its Greenwave Growers Cooperative business project. One: Provide more class resources for students. Two: Teach financial literacy in an engaging way. They met and exceeded all goals by focusing on local needs, marketing and creating an accomplishable business plan.

Members planted, maintained and harvested one-fourth acre of strawberries. They then packed and sold 450 clamshell pints to earn \$1,300. They also planted and maintained 1,200 strawberry hanging baskets to sell.

Still not ready to put their green thumbs away, they planted and maintained 93 square feet of gardens, which produced 2,000 pounds of produce. To give back to the community, they donated a majority of it to a food bank and sold specialty lettuce.

After expenses, the members profited \$10,000 and developed money management and agribusiness skills.



Ponchatoula FFA members raised strawberries as part of their Greenwave Growers Cooperative.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE RIDGEMONT FFA

The average American is three generations removed from the family farm, but that doesn't mean they should be clueless about where their food, fiber and fuel comes from.

As part of its Farmers Feeding All program, the Ridgemont FFA of Ridgeway, Ohio, sought to share knowledge about our country's agriculture resources and did so by training members as teachers and educating young leaders.



Ridgemont FFA members developed an educational Farmers Feeding All program.

Twelve members and two teachers attended the National Youth Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Ga., to give three rural safety presentations to 425 students. Members continued to give educational seminars at leadership events across the country and informed and inspired more than a thousand individuals.

Among the highlights was a four-session lesson on the use of GPS/GIS technology in agricultural food production. Those sessions were taught to 125 urban students who had little experience with modern agriculture.

DANCING WITH THE STARS

SPENCER COUNTY FFA

Spencer County FFA in Taylorsville, Ky., put on an evening of Dancing With the Stars. Audience members had the chance to see local leaders such as the sheriff, magistrates and high school administrative staff dancing for a good cause.

By partnering with the high school dance team, the chapter celebrated the talents of experienced dancers while drawing a crowd with the promise of local “stars.” The Alumni Relations Committee personally reached out to local celebrities, and 31 participated in the event. Twelve of the 18 experienced dancers were FFA members, and those students instructed the less-experienced celebrity participants.

Through record keeping on a chapter laptop, funds were tracked so earned income could be divided among participating students. All chapter members took part in selling tickets, coming to the show, preparing flyers or helping announce the event.

The chapter raised \$4,750 by selling 848 tickets, which supported both the high school dance team and the chapters’ fund for paying 50 percent of the cost to attend the state convention.



FUN, FIT COMMUNITY

YELM FFA

The Yelm FFA in Washington looked to a popular event in the community to reach out to citizens. The annual Christmas in the Park is already a popular event, so the chapter decided to integrate four activities that would promote healthy living.

The chapter partnered with the Yelm Chamber of Commerce to encourage positive lifestyle choices. Three hundred fifty students and adults from ages 3 to 87 had the chance to test their abilities at a fitness challenge, and those with the best times won an FFA T-shirt.

Exercise wasn’t the only subject addressed. Participants learned about substance abuse, nutrition and the importance of taking care of mental health.

One hands-on activity taught guests how to visualize proper portion sizes for all food groups. FFA members benefited by learning the skills of organizing a large-scale community event, hosting activities, and setting up and tearing down an event while partnering with local officials.

Spencer County FFA members hosted a “Dancing With The Stars” community event.



Yelm FFA members cooperated with the Yelm Chamber of Commerce to conduct a healthy living activity at a local December community event.

A COSTA RICAN COFFEE AND SERVICE ADVENTURE

REPLICATE THIS ACTIVITY AT YOUR CHAPTER

Fundraise early: The Tri-Valley members run a fresh concession stand at sporting events that builds on what they learn in their food science class.

Think outside the common tourist destinations. Lesser-traveled European countries, Australia, New Zealand, and South American countries can teach students about foreign agriculture.

Teach students that agricultural jobs can include growing industries such as agro-tourism and ecotourism.

Plan trips that include an aspect of community service as well as fun learning experiences.

TRI-VALLEY FFA

Lush forest, coffee plants trailing up mountainsides, remote villages tucked into hills and overlooking the indigo Caribbean Sea—the agricultural landscape of Costa Rica looks quite different than much of the United States.

On their trip to the Latin American country, members from Tri-Valley FFA in New York learned about how Costa Rican agriculture works while taking part in a service project that changed both their chapter and the community they worked alongside.

Over spring break 2011, 18 members and five chaperones traveled to Costa Rica for nine days. The students saw the country's extremes: from the populated city of San Jose to a beach on the other end of the country to the lush rainforest viewed from an open-air Jeep ride. They visited an alligator farm and drank water from a coconut cracked open by a machete.

Through their travels, members realized the possibilities of sustainable ecotourism, rural tropical agriculture, and production for internationally traded commodities such as coffee.

"Costa Rica is moderately wealthy, and there is a tremendous amount of agriculture in a confined space," FFA advisor Tara Berescik said. "We were able to see coconut production, a palm oil plantation, eco- and agro-tourism, and we volunteered at a coffee co-op."

The students saw a farm in the tiny cloud forest town of San Bernardo where coffee was grown and prepared for international sale. The owners of the farm were interested in bringing in more visitors for agro-tourism.

"I didn't realize how down to a science it is to get coffee from the plant to the coffee grinder," senior Nat Tompkins said. "You have to have it at a certain humidity when you're roasting before you can grind. There's a certain time only that you can pick it. It's more than pick, roast, grind and drink."

The students and local family identified the need for a space for visitors, so everyone decided to build a coffeehouse where visitors could rest, have a cup of fresh coffee, and learn about the farm.

The FFA members helped with the construction of the building—with 150 bags of cement, they laid sidewalks, installed a septic tank, hauled cinder blocks and constructed the facility over a combined 336 hours of work.

Working side by side with the local farmers, they were treated like part of an extended family.

Cheyenne Hennessey, senior and chapter secretary, remembers how ultimately rewarding the labor was.

"The heat was excruciating and we were all sweating buckets," she said. "But it didn't matter to us, because it was something that we would remember forever and the family would too. They had so little but shared so much with us. They shared their meals and their life and their culture."



Tri-Valley FFA members primed the interior walls of the coffeehouse before the murals were printed.

Agri-tourism and ecotourism are huge in Costa Rica, and the traveling group got to see a great deal of the agriculture.



“*THEY HAD SO LITTLE*
BUT SHARED SO MUCH WITH US.

— Cheyenne Hennessey, Chapter Secretary

INNOVATE



Elton FFA members were instrumental in assisting the local war veterans not only in mobility and exercise as they competed in a fishing rodeo, but also in companionship as they listened to personal accounts of the war and life lessons that these heroes lived.

HOOK, LINE AND SINKER ELTON FFA

It's not every day students get to fish with a hero. The Elton FFA in Louisiana paired fishing fun with learning from local heroes in the Veteran's Home Fishing Rodeo on Sept. 11.

FFA members partnered with a local veterans home to learn stories and share family histories related to war and life lessons. Students realized how many heroes are living nearby who long for a kind gesture and someone to listen to their life experiences.

Twelve members teamed with veterans to assist with mobility, companionship, eating and fishing during the fishing rodeo. Students were proud of the responsibility to make their local hero's day a bit brighter and easier.

The chapter continued the relationship with local veterans by attending the Veterans Spring Fling and constructing 10 projects to donate to the home's auction. The items raised \$180 for the veterans to use for games and materials.



Lawrence County FFA members install reflective address signs to aid local residents in emergencies.

SAVING MINUTES, SAVING LIVES LAWRENCE COUNTY FFA

When it comes to emergency response, every minute counts. Lawrence County FFA of Moulton, Ala., noticed a need for more visible address signs on local houses that could save responders precious moments and ultimately save lives.

Members surveyed local police, fire and ambulance services about the need for reflective address signs, emphasizing the idea that if responders can't find you, it's hard for them to help you.

A police officer visited the school to teach students the method for numbering houses in the county. For example, if a house number is 6854 Highway 33, that house is 6.854 miles north of the Winston/Lawrence county line.

More than 40 reflective signs were sold and put up throughout the community, and the chapter continues to sell more. Five community members who assist the chapter also received signs, including a man who allows students to practice forestry judging on his property each year.

CRAB STATS

MILFORD FFA

The Milford FFA of Delaware learned that their Delaware shoreline is one of the few places in the world where horseshoe crabs come to mate during the early summer. The local wildlife agency hosts a crab count once a year that helps the agency keep track of breeding numbers.

Sixteen members walked along the beach in 20 paces at a time, laying down 3 x 3 rectangles and counting the crabs they saw. This activity was a fascinating way to learn about random sampling, tracking and shifting animal populations.

Female crabs are on the bottom of the piles and are much larger than male crabs found on top. During the count, Milford FFA members identified the sex of the crabs correctly every time.

Members learned that tagged horseshoe crabs can be tracked from one spawning ground to another. Their work aided local and state wildlife departments.



Members of the Delaware Nature Society instruct Milford FFA members on the differences between male and female horseshoe crabs, as well as the mating rituals that the horseshoe crabs go through. This information is vital to students so they can make accurate counts during the high tides.



GARDENING FOR HEALTH

PONCHATOULA FFA

Ponchatoula FFA members educate kindergartners about healthy nutrition habits.

Start educating the young, and lives can be changed. That was the thought behind the Ponchatoula FFA Project Aggie—Youth Voice Promoting Agricultural Literacy. With 52 percent of Louisiana teens overweight, the chapter realized the need to change nutrient habits early.

Members reached out to elementary-aged students with hands-on activities for all third graders in the district. Not only did members create community gardens, they attended schools to put on agricultural literacy events and spread their knowledge to special-needs students.

The chapter received \$5,000 in grants to build mini gardens used to educate children at the Ponchatoula Strawberry Festival. It was so successful that nearly 11,000 people learned about agriculture and healthy lifestyles.

Even better was the surprise that after 50 kindergartners heard the lessons, 90 percent said they would eat more fruits and vegetables every day.



Ridgemont FFA members help a local farmer establish a rural emergency plan.

MAP IT OUT RIDGEMONT FFA

Every farm has a different placement of key shutoff points, chemicals, animals and equipment. This puts responders at a disadvantage when they arrive on the scene of a farm emergency. The Ridgemont FFA in Ridgeway, Ohio, set out to create rural emergency plans and maps for 20 farms.

Using GPS and GIS technology, they mapped out key points as well as designed farm safety description sheets. Members collaborated with the Ag Promotions committee from the Canadian Government of Alberta, two fire departments and one EMS squad.

Twenty farmers in the area benefitted from the new mapping technologies. Maps were stored in reflective, waterproof REP tubes and placed in easy-to-find locations on the farms.

Members learned how to use current technology to solve real-world problems in farm safety. A Rhodes State College professor taught 22 FFA members to pin points on Google Earth to produce each map. First responders told students this project will go a long way in saving lives and reducing inventory losses on farms.

PROM NIGHT FOR ALL SHENANDOAH FFA

The Shenandoah FFA of Middletown, Ind., believes that everyone should have equal access to a fun and memorable prom. Members organized a dazzling spring dance event for members of the community with developmental disabilities.

The handicap-accessible “Adventures Under the Sea” event was formal and fun. More than 250 students and clients showed their moves on the dance floor while photographers snapped pictures against castle-like decorations. Balloon artists and magicians entertained as attendees received tiaras and medals and nibbled on veggies, cheese and mini sandwiches.

Members of a group home received donations of formal wear so all attendees could look their best.

Shenandoah FFA was rewarded an \$8,798 grant and was recognized by the state FFA association with the Success for the USDA Living to Serve initiative. The chapter plans on making the event bigger next year and will continue to reach out to people with disabilities in the community.



Shenandoah FFA members hosted a spring “Adventures Under the Sea” event for developmentally disabled community members.



Hendrix Fire Protection was able to teach the public about the proper use of fire extinguishers and allow people to practice this important skill during a Southeast Bulloch FFA event.

A PERSONAL RESPONSE

SOUTHEAST BULLOCH FFA

A tragic event can bring together a community and inspire those affected to reach out and help others.

When the town of Brooklet, Ga., experienced the loss of a family killed in a house fire, the Southeast Bulloch FFA came together to share vital safety practices that could prevent more needless deaths.

Five organizations joined FFA to participate in the event held in the school's courtyard and cafeteria. Safety demonstrations ranged from first aid to fire, bike and water safety.

Attendees ate a meal of hot dogs, potato chips, brownies and soft drinks while learning about vital safety practices. Participants practiced spraying a household fire extinguisher and heard safety information from AirEVAC and EMS teams. The event honored the lives lost in a meaningful and informative way.

FROM A FARMER'S VIEW

STANLEY-BOYD FFA

A breakfast plate of sausage, eggs and cheese costs a few dollars at a diner, but a farmer will see only a few cents of that price. The Stanley-Boyd FFA of Stanley, Wis., came up with the idea for an event that would illustrate how much work goes into a small amount of profit in modern-day farming.

At the Farmer's Share breakfast, more than 1,800 people enjoyed the meal of eggs, pancakes, sausages,



cheese curds, applesauce and milk or coffee. The cost was only 50 cents, which is what the farmer would receive to produce the food.

Guests could also take tours of a dairy farm, which ran every half hour and focused on the work of a modern dairy.

Seven agricultural businesses had exhibits, games or products available at the breakfast. Sixty-five chapter members took part in setting up, serving, cooking and cleaning up while teaching the community about the work that goes into their food.

Stanley-Boyd FFA and FFA Alumni members prepare food for the thousands of customers who attended the Farmer's Share breakfast.

SIMPLE SCHOOL SAVINGS

WILSON FFA

There's no Walmart around the corner for students in Wilson, Kan. In fact, the nearest superstore is about an hour's drive away, so it takes time and sometimes a little financial maneuvering for families to get all the supplies their children need for school.

The Wilson FFA wanted to address this problem with a "Simple Savings" program, which offered discounted school supplies to elementary students. Over the summer, the chapter gathered marked-down supplies and donations.

Once it came time for school enrollment, a booth with scissors, rulers, pencils, glue sticks and more was available for parents to purchase supplies at a reduced rate.

Not only did 41 students buy supplies, teachers had year-round access to free materials. Sets of supplies were put aside for 21 in-need students to receive for free on their first day of school.

Wilson FFA members made it a priority to ensure that all students had access to the needed supplies for learning.



DRIVEN TO SUCCEED

REPLICATE THIS SUCCESS AT YOUR CHAPTER

Don't let the grass grow under your feet. Keep at your projects.

Absence at events does not make the heart grow fonder. Chapter officers need to plan ahead and be present at all meetings.

Make sure that officers stay organized. Remember that you will have to be the driving force behind activities. Members and outsiders will only be as excited about events as you are.

SCREVEN COUNTY MIDDLE FFA

When Screven County Middle FFA of Georgia wanted to express their appreciation for veterans, they took the time to write letters by hand and send them to their local heroes.

They then hosted a Veteran's Day banquet and served 52 local veterans as well as the veterans' families. They took their respect even further by making a wall of fame, decorating a float and riding with veterans in a local parade.

"It turned into a year-long project where we adopted a group of active military in Afghanistan," FFA advisor Bridget Mixson said. "One of their members stationed out of Niagara Falls came to visit and presented a flag flown in the students' honor."

The chapter has 125 members, and its collection of creative activities earned it the Outstanding Middle School Award of the year.

"We had a lot of people from our community attend our events, and help us during, and before and after," member Gillian McGalliard said.

By listening to the needs and ideas of its students, the chapter created innovative activities that were well-attended and exciting for members and the school at large.

Member Erika Driggers competed in a public speaking contest and spoke about the need for sustainable agricultural jobs—especially in a country that is facing food struggles in the future. The idea led to the creation of a "Hunger Banquet."

"It was very interesting to watch the reaction of people when we told them that one

farmer in the U.S. today has the daunting task of feeding 129 people and that there are currently more federal prison inmates than people who farm," Driggers said. "I truly believe that a nation that isn't hungry for agriculture will soon be hungry for food."

When guests attended the banquet, they were given a status of high, low, or middle income and were served different amounts of food based on their income level. At the end of the program, everyone received a full meal, but the event illustrated the impact of food shortages around the world and the possibility of upcoming food shortages in the United States.

Donations from the community and the parents of FFA members added up to make the program a success.

"In these hard economic times, we try to select events that will fit into our budget and will allow all students to participate for free," Driggers said.

To address health, members approached Mixson with the idea of telling personal stories that would relate to student health needs.

The chapter organized a health fair with 10 stations that 340 students from within the school visited. The topics ranged from drug and alcohol use to abstinence and mental health concerns. The students shared their experiences through drama and peer-to-peer sharing.

"They found real-life stories of teens struggling from these issues, dressed up and memorized their parts," Mixson said. "All students rotated around and heard the stories and how it took their lives down the wrong path. In the end, they heard what they could do. With real-life scenarios, I do think it hit home."



The Screven County Middle FFA chapter's "Attitude of Gratitude Campaign" was designed to encourage members to become active, involved citizens of their school, community and country through partnerships with local veterans and current service men and women.

The FFA Homecoming Tailgate was designed to promote non-member interaction with current FFA members through a fun event. Each FFA member was encouraged to bring a non-FFA member to the event where they could participate in a variety of homecoming activities, including a car smash.



INNOVATE



Beverly Manor Middle FFA members participated in a very meaningful and respectful retirement ceremony of American flags. Over 90 American flags were collected to be retired.

SMALL GROUPS, BIG SUCCESS

BEVERLY MANOR MIDDLE FFA

Beverly Manor Middle FFA in Staunton, Va., knows that small numbers can accomplish large goals. The chapter organized itself in small groups to allow more projects to be completed and more overall involvement from each member.

The chapter made choosing a healthy lifestyle fun by creating an open and welcoming athletic environment. They organized open gym activities for members and parents to play basketball, volleyball, cornhole and other games.

One of the ways they incentivized students was by sponsoring “FFA Bucks” or a rewards and prize system that celebrated participation and hard work done well.

They care about their environment, too. Members joined with a local recycling program to add four aluminum recycling containers to the school and supported a cardboard recycling program.

Knowledge passed through all grade levels when FFA officers made three presentations to sixth grade agriculture students about food production and the importance of agriculture.

LEADERSHIP BEYOND THE SCHOOLYARD

CHATHAM MIDDLE FFA

Chatham Middle FFA in Virginia invests in its leaders. Agricultural education students attend monthly leadership training workshops where they learn about goal setting and communication to develop deep relationships and decision-making skills.

This leadership shows in the variety of activities the chapter organizes each year. The hands-on methods are apparent when students compete in judging and events in forestry and livestock.

Students reached outside the school with their “Freedom Pen Project.” Members turned hand-crafted wooden ink pens and pencils on micro lathes to create beautiful writing instruments. They wrote notes and sent the pens and pencils to U.S. service troops stationed abroad.

Their concern for leadership extends beyond their friends and peers and even into the animal world. The chapter teamed with the local Humane Society to build houses for homeless dogs. While doing so, they researched and taught others about animal rights and welfare.



Chatham Middle FFA members researched and taught others about animal rights and welfare.

GREEN THUMB GROUP

CREEKSIDE JUNIOR FFA

The 67-member Creekside Junior FFA in Pearl River, La., has created earth-friendly programs that support the community. Members raised flowers and vegetables from seed and sold them to the community so they could raise gardens at a lower cost than what they'd find at the local greenhouse.

The chapter's interest in gardening went deeper when Creekside FFA began composting all garden wastes. Members built four large compost bins out of shipping pallets, dumped plant matter in the bins, and turned and mixed the compost. The finished compost is used to provide nutrient-rich soil to the school garden.

The chapter kicked off the school year with its annual FFA Car Wash. Each student who sold at least 10 tickets had their FFA dues paid for by the chapter. The final haul was more than \$1,200 in tickets.

There's nothing like shooting hoops to drive competition and remind students of the importance of their health. In addition to many other successful activities, the chapter sponsored a school-wide 4-on-4 basketball tournament.



Creekside Junior FFA members created earth-friendly garden programs to support the community.



MEANINGFUL SAVINGS

FIFTH WARD JUNIOR FFA

The Fifth Ward Junior FFA in Bush, La., extended an arm to their community to learn about and support local agriculture. They provided a low-cost place for community members to have animals processed. FFA members got to work cutting, wrapping and preparing smoked and fresh sausage. Generating \$3,000 for the community, the chapter processed 26 pigs and 10 deer.

Back at school, the chapter conducted a Louisiana Hunter Education program for sixth graders, emphasizing wildlife needs and local habitats. Students learned about conservation, wildlife and natural resources.

To create a caring, respectful culture at the school, the chapter conducted a character and anti-bullying program. They took it a step further by funding school-wide "Positive Behavior" and "Student of the Month" programs to reward good behavior.

Several fundraisers over the year assisted FFA members with covering costs, supporting events and funding activities. The chapter sold fruit trees, turkeys, hams, fruit and cookies.

The Fifth Ward Junior FFA conducted educational programs discussing wildlife and local habitats.

| ACHIEVING | *SUCCESS*



National FFA staff, judges, advisors and others involved in the selection process for national awards and recognition offer these valuable suggestions:

1. 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.
2. Include facts about the percentage of members who participated and accomplishments.
3. Keep a file of activities and notes on areas for improvement within each activity. Students can use this information for Program of Activities planning.
4. Take note of ideas that spring to mind when completing the application. Jot down these ideas to use during the next POA planning session.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 POA 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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