



## Christy Windham National Officer Journal

**September 26**

**Where I'll be next week: Missouri**

The past few weeks I have been getting ready for the national FFA convention. It's so hard to believe that it is right around the corner. I met up with my team a couple of weeks ago in Indianapolis. We finished up writing reflections for the national FFA convention as well as working on session scripts and retiring addresses. I am so excited about the convention and seeing so many awesome people that I've met throughout this year. Also while we were in Indy, we had lunch with the entire FFA Center staff. Our team had the opportunity to thank them so very much for their kindness, friendship and hospitality during our time as officers. I can't say enough how fortunate our organization is to have such dedicated people working in our offices. They are wonderful. Right now, I am in Memphis, Tennessee. Tomorrow I will attend the Mid-South Fair and then I will head to Missouri for some chapter visits. Please keep our team in your thoughts and prayers as we prepare for an amazing 77th National FFA Convention.

**August 30, 2004**

**Where I'll be next week: Home!**

Sitting here in my dining room, it feels really good to be at home! This is the first time in several weeks that I've had time to spend with my family and I am enjoying it very much. These past few weeks on the road have proven to be very exciting. A new experience that I had this trip was attending a NASCAR race. Now, one would think that being from the south, I would have attended many of these races, but this was my first one. After my day at the Michigan International Speedway-I certainly hope that it will not be my last race. Casey, Anne and I woke



up at about 4:30 a.m. the day of the race to make sure that we got there early. Now that is the understatement of the year. When we arrived at the Michigan International Speedway, we met Kate Powers who is the Director of the Michigan FFA Foundation.

Ms Powers had put together an entire FFA hospitality tent and members from surrounding states had the opportunity to attend. Jason Leffler, a Busch series driver, came to the tent and signed autographs. Afterward we met and Jake and several other Michigan State Officers and headed down to the pits. We saw Jeff Gordon and Dale Junior's cars. It was way cool. After my time in Lansing, Michigan, I flew to New York City to meet up with Amy and Jana (foundation regional director). As soon as I arrived, Amy and I headed up to Times Square. This was my first time





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in the Big Apple and it was incredible. We saw where “Good Morning America” is filmed as well as MTV’s TRL. During our time in NYC, we met with Mitsui, Securities Inc, and Pfizer Animal Health. After spending time in NYC we drove through New Jersey visiting Masterfoods, Inc. They make M&M’s and all that other great candy we enjoy. While visiting in New Jersey, Rebecca – the state vice-president was able to join us. It was great having her along. We also drove through Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland. We ended our week visiting companies like Merial and UPS that have their headquarters in Atlanta, GA. Our last stop was at International Paper in Savannah, GA. We took a tour of the Owens- Thomas House and ate at the famous Lady and Son’s restaurant.

**July 27, 2004**

**Where I’ll be next week: Virginia NLCSO**

*“What matters in character is not whether one holds this or that opinion: what matters is how proudly one upholds it.”- Germaine de Stael*

I liked this quote for this journal entry because it reminded me of the recent State Presidents’ Conference. While it is wonderful to see so many great state officers gathered in our nation’s capital, the primary reason for this conference is to begin conducting the business of the National FFA Organization. State officers from around the country serve as delegates and State President’s Conference is where the preliminary issues are debated. Seeing how professional state officers are about the process was a growing process for me. Many hold different views about the future of the FFA but they are all willing to put those views aside to make sure the entire organization prospers.

This year’s theme was “Leading the Tradition”. I enjoyed seeing Tyler, Shawn, Kristy, Riley, Cliff, Kacy, Matthew, Jill, Charlee, Rand, Davis, Coty, Matt, Marc, Adam, Mark and many others from my NLCSOs. But it was also great to meet new people. The first day of SPC was a kick-off day where we began delegate work and had reflections on the lawn of the capitol. I felt as if I were bursting with pride as my national officer team reflected on the sacrifice that so many have made on behalf of our country. Another joy of SPC was having my family there. My mom, dad, and little brother were able to drive up from Mississippi to be there for the entire conference. It was their first time in D.C. and I know they very much enjoyed seeing the nation’s capital.

The second day of the conference was Leading the Tradition of Integrity. Delegate work was accomplished as well as a game of ameba tag. Before going on the night tour, I was able to visit with my friends Jeff and Cara from Minnesota, Travis from Oklahoma, Susan and Rebecca from Missouri and Marcus from California. . During the night tour, Shavon from the Virgin Islands and I had the opportunity to visit many of the memorials together. The night tour was nice because everyone on the tour had so much respect for the memorials. I felt such an incredible feeling of American pride watching Lauren and Anita at the Vietnam wall and Cole and Wade at the Korean memorial. The third day “Leading the Tradition of Service” was led by Amy and Javier. The day started out at the Ronald Reagan building. There I got to spend time with Bre and Kevin from Washington. Kevin



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and his roommate, Brooks from North Dakota, let me in on the newest movies. (They would get up early every morning just to see which ones were on) That day, Lucas and Trae and I tried to think of new redneck jokes – very unsuccessful...haha. . During that day we also went to Arlington National Cemetery. While at the cemetery, Stacia, Amy, Anne and I were able to lay a wreath on behalf of the National FFA at the tomb of the unknown soldier. That was an experience I will not soon forget.

One afternoon while we were in D.C., our national officer team took our parents to see some of the city. It was so funny watching our parents get on and off the metro. Luckily, no parent was left behind. On Friday, “Leading the Tradition of Perseverance” was our day theme. During that day we had the privilege of visiting the United States Department of Education. As we were navigating our way through the metal detectors, I got the chance to talk with Rose and Jamie from Ohio, they let me in on what they aspired to do this year as state officers. Good Luck ladies, I know that you will do a terrific job. While we were at the USDE, we received LifeKnowledge training, a new FFA initiative coming out this fall. Ms. Linda McKay provided us information about character training and another highlight was Ms. Susan Sclafani, assistant secretary of Adult and Vocational Education. Ms. Sclafani was wonderful about answering our questions and career and technical education. That evening we boarded the Spirit of the Potomac, a cruise ship where we would enjoy a night of eating and dancing. I had a great time dancing with Jason from South Dakota (he taught me how to jitter bug) and many others.

The last day we went to the National Zoo. Brendan from Wyoming and I went and checked out the giant pandas. I also got to hang out with Dusty and Malcolm from Utah. Before I end this journal, I must give a shout-out to “DA BUS”. This was the bus that Amy and I traveled with throughout the week. We had tons of bus pride led by Justin, Becky, Jeff, Amy Berry (Stacia’s little sister) and other rock star “campers”..hehe.

Thanks to everyone that attended SPC- I had a fabulous time. I am confident in the work that each of you accomplished. I greatly anticipate the impact that you will make at the 77th National FFA Convention.

### July 7

Where I’ll be next week: Indianapolis for the National FFA Board of Directors Meeting

*“The greatest challenge of the day is; how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution that has to start with each one of us”- Dorothy Day*



Without a doubt I experienced a revolution of the heart at the 2004 Oklahoma FFA Alumni Camp! The past three days has been nothing short of amazing. I cannot even describe the intense real emotion that occurs at alumni camp. Both Anne Knapke and I arrived in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to meet Grandma and Grandpa Dean who were to bring us to Camp Tulokogee. Grandma and Grandpa Dean have been with the Oklahoma Alumni for over thirty years and I was stunned at the amount of dedication that they have to FFA members. I soon realized that



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there are many alumni supporters like the Deans' throughout the state. When we arrived at Camp Tulokogee, we went undercover. Instead of being introduced as a national officer, we were given fake name tags and were able to act as campers. My pseudo camper name was Christy Smith of the Wanoka FFA Chapter. When the real campers began to arrive – it was time to make friends! Some of the first people that I met were in my small group. Martha (who rocked with FFA talent at the banquet), Chrissy, Brandon, Joseph, Hank, Skylar, Danel, Johnna, Stacey, Keli, and Jacquie: thanks for being an awesome “home” small group! Number eight all the way! After hanging out with my small group for a little while, I met Riley and Jamie from the Woodward FFA Chapter. They were so kind to me and even let me sit with them at evening inspiration. The state FFA officers do evening inspirations. The Oklahoma FFA officer team continually impressed me. Travis, Shawna, Clayton, Cale, Whitney, Bethany, Cortney and Mike: thank you so much for your

passion for our organization. The night that all of us stayed up late and talked meant so much to me and I am thrilled that the members of Oklahoma have you serving them this year. Another small group that I had the privilege of spending time with was Group 4. Group 4- you guys made me smile all the time!

Austin and Chance- thank you for being sassy with me and yes

“I can be from the curly south”...haha. Nikki, Jackie, Patricia, Justin, Jake, Kimberly and the rest of group – I only have one question for you “Group 4, HOW DO YOU FEEL?!” More rock star FFA members that I met were Kylie and Allen. You two are some of the sweetest people that I have met in a long time.

On the second day of alumni camp, Anne and I were introduced to present our workshop and we simply came up out of the audience. The reaction from some of the campers was quite funny. Anne and I were so excited that we had tricked them. . . . As I went throughout the week it was great to hang out with the Small Group Leaders. You guys rocked! I really enjoyed spending some time with Tracy Smith a past OK state officer. She is just too sweet!

To wrap up – I just have to say that from role model conversations to listening to Merrit and Chase play guitar to watching with pride as Aaron and the banquet officers did a great job- my time in Oklahoma was amazing. For me, Oklahoma represented the best of what our organization stands for. Thank you for making me proud to serve the National FFA Organization. . . .

On the road again....



**July 3, 2004**

Where I'll be next week: Oklahoma/ Indianapolis



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*“Don’t run through life so fast that you forget where you’ve been and lose where you’re going. Life is not a race, but a journey to be savored every step of the way.” – Kobi Yamanda*

I can’t believe how fast this year is going. It seems like only yesterday my team and I were sitting in the John Deere room at the National FFA Center waiting to meet FFA members and state officers. Now in the blink of an eye, I’ve attended ten state conventions and two National Leadership Conferences for State Officers. Where does time go? Just this past week and a half, I’ve spent time at the Washington Leadership Conference and Kentucky NLCSO. . It was great to get back to Washington, D.C. and see some familiar faces that I have met throughout the year. I was excited to see my friends from Arkansas, Iowa and Georgia. They seemed like they were having a blast in our nation’s capital. It was also nice to meet new friends like Dwayne and Sheila. . Unfortunately, I was only able to stay at WLC for a day but it didn’t take me long to realize what an amazing conference it is. After WLC, I flew into Nashville, Tenn. When I arrived, I was reunited with my traveling buddy- the one and only Miss Anne Knapke. From there we begin our journey to Lake Barkley, Kentucky for our second NLCSO. . This was a very large NLCSO. There were six states represented: Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Michigan and Kentucky. All of the state officer teams had been forming very unique bonds already. For instance, the Kentucky state officers will be forever bonded by their aardvark experience ( they will tell you about it, I can’t even begin to describe it..haha). The Georgia state officer team will never be lacking entertainment this year. Paula from Georgia makes sure that she does her part in making everyone laugh. It was nice to visit again with some friends on the Michigan state officer team. Jake, Aaron and Doug – thanks so much for taking Anne and me on the swing sets. It was such a well-needed conversation with friends. I’m hoping that I’ll get the chance to take the Indiana officers’ up on their offer to come down for a Bar-B-Que. . Their state officer house isn’t too far from Indianapolis so if I ever get a chance – I would love to spend some more time with those fabulous people. Matt and Eric- thanks for the offer!

One thing that I always looked forward each morning of NLCSO was a big bear hug from Cliff who was from Illinois. Don’t forget Cliff – 2 dollars!..haha. . Rich, Becky, Shana, and Kacy- you guys rocked during reflections. I’m so excited about the lives you will touch. . Finally from the good ole Rocky Top state of Tennessee- Michael, JD, Chris and the rest of the crew – you guys were so much fun. I want to come hang out at your convention in Gatlinburg next year. It was evident that your team can have a good time no matter where you are. . To all the state officers who attended Kentucky NLCSO- thank you so much for risking boldly and playing at a high level to get better for the members of your state associations. . Continue to create the magic and if you ever need me or LeWanda –don’t hesitate to ask! Remember “You can never grow until you stop comparing yourself to others” – You are all fabulous, please don’t forget that!

**June 20**

**Where I’ll be next week: Kentucky**

*“First say to yourself what you would be; and then do what you have to do”—Epictetus*



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I have grown so much the past few days. They have been jam packed with intense emotional growth. My first NLCSO (National Leadership Conference for State Officers) was last week. It was held in Bunkie, Louisiana. While I was there, I had the pleasure of hanging out with some fabulous state officers. From Alabama: Matt, Bradley, Michael, Alicia, Katie, and Marc were so enthusiastic and I know that their enthusiasm will totally touch some lives. Michael- Be careful with all of those birds...I hear they carry off small dogs. From Mississippi- Kristy, Riley, Kayla, Cody, Avangelia and Amber- my heart was filled with pride as I realized how well you are going to lead the Mississippi FFA Association. Thank you for making me a proud Mississippian. Finally from Louisiana, Tyler, Shawn, Emily, Nikki, Danielle, Trae, Chris aka James, Amanda and Cade – you guys are just a ton of fun. It is very evident the passion that you have for your association and I wish you the best of luck as you continue on your amazing adventure as state officers. I could not have asked for a better first NLCSO experience. I was reminded time and time again of the reason why so many people are eager to serve this amazing organization. Congratulations to all the state officers!!

**June 16-19**

**Where I'll be next week: Louisiana National Leadership Conference for State Officers**

*"If someone listens, or stretches out a hand, or whispers a kind word of encouragement, or attempts to understand, extraordinary things begin to happen"- Loretta Girzartis*

I just recently completed my state convention tour. I am so happy that my last state convention was in Arizona. I had a FABULOUS time. I had a few flight problems getting into Tucson, but what else is new? On the first day of convention, Higley FFA took me to lunch. It was great getting to know Dustin, Whitney, Stephanie and Ms. Bolt. We ate lunch at a little restaurant called "Greasy Tony's"! Don't let the name fool you...it was a filling lunch. After lunch, was the first general session. Everyone in the audience was wowed as the state officers presented reflections, "A Shining Past, and a Brighter Future". What a fantastic way to kick off convention! After the session, I went to dinner with the Chino Valley FFA Chapter. While I was with them, I met fun friends like "Vegas", Trevor, Oren, Jaime and Marissa. After the evening session, the Buckeye FFA Chapter was kind enough to give me a ride back to the hotel. Shelton and many others entertained me. We also hung out at the social that evening. Following the convention social, I had the chance to have a girl party with the Yuma FFA Chapter. Syndey, Sam, Allyson and Katie were wonderful. I enjoyed looking at their chapter scrapbook. The following day of convention began really early at breakfast with the Chino Valley FFA Chapter. For lunch, the Parker FFA Chapter took me to Gentle Ben's where we set a world record for ordering, eating, and paying for our food so we could make it back to the afternoon session. That evening was spent with the Arizona FFA delegates. I was so impressed with their level of dedication to their FFA Association. Remember delegates: The word "If" is the hinge on a door that you determine which way it swings. Finally, on the last day of convention my morning began with the fabulous Peoria FFA Chapter. Thank you guys for a wonderful morning conversation. Thanks especially to Sarah for our conversation. It lifted me up! After the final session and the new state



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officers were officially installed (by the way, the new state officers are going to do a rock star job)- it was off to lunch with the Willcox FFA Chapter. We had some yummy food at Johnny Rockets. Girls from Willcox- you guys are a blast! Before heading off to the airport, I had the chance to go with Brian Hogue's (past AZ state president and national officer candidate) dad and little sister, Holly, to get an Eegees'. ( I think that is spelled right). It was a really tasty strawberry slushy. It was really interesting to hear Brian's dad tell me all about Arizona agriculture and wildlife- I truly learned a lot. Also, thanks to Holly for beginning so sweet. Arizona FFA – I thank you from the bottom of my heart for making my very last state convention so memorable.

### **June 6-10**

*"In the confrontation between the stream and the rock the stream always wins - not through strength but through perseverance."---H. Jackson Brown*

Perseverance is a word that describes my time spent at home during the Mississippi FFA State Convention. Man, was it good to be home!! It always amazes me to see dear friends who continue to persevere even in trying times. Seeing friends who have worked harder than ever to win a career development event or be elected a state officer was such a rewarding experience. The first people I saw upon arriving home were this year's state officers: Meredith, Dana, Daniel, Cory and Kristy along with the Junior State Officers: Ashton, Wesley, Mikell, Falan, Melissa and Brandon. Also, Lindsey Calhoun, past state officer from Ohio, was there helping to run our state nominating committee. It was great to see all of these people. My entire state officer team along with our state coordinator, Ms Amy, and her baby, Morgan, were helping out as well. The first day of convention was filled with registration and workshops. Stacia Berry came in on Monday to help me out with two workshops. She did an awesome job on her keynote that night - it was really special to see how she is able to touch lives. Other chapters that were wonderful were Biggersville, Carthage (congrats to Cody - newly elected state treasurer and Andrew- newly elected Jr. State Officer), Northeast Jones (my home chapter), Taylorsville, Forest-Scott, Weir and many others.

Congratulations to all new State Officers, Kristy, Riley, Cody, Kayla, Avangelia and Amber. I have utmost confidence that y'all will do a wonderful job. Until next time...

### **June 2-4**

*"The future starts today, not tomorrow"-- Virginia Satir*

Many FFA members in the "natural state" began their future these past few days. I've had the pleasure of attending the Arkansas State FFA Convention. The Arkansas convention is held at their state leadership camp. It is a great atmosphere for members to not only attend sessions together, but also stay together on the beautiful grounds of Camp Couchdale. The first night that I was there, the Ola FFA chapter took me out for ice cream. Darren, Paul and Aaron were all running for a district office. I was flattered that they let me listen to their candidate speeches. One thing unique to their convention is the campaigning that takes place for state and district office. It gives convention an added bit of jazz. Mike from Ola let me check out his proficiency application, which totally rocked! I also met some amazing student from the Dewitt FFA chapter. I really



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appreciated them coming early to my workshop to help me set up. Thanks guys! There were just so many awesome people in Arkansas like my friends Amber, Audra, Randy and the state officers. I have so many wonderful memories from Camp Couchdale and the Arkansas State convention. Thank you guys for an amazing trip. I look forward to coming back one day.

### May 30- June 2

Where I'll be next week: Mississippi's State FFA Convention

*"What does it matter how much we do if what we're doing isn't what matters most?"*  
--Stephen R. Covey

These past few days, I have had the privilege of spending some time in Amy's Rasmussen's home state of Huskerland!! I had a fabulous time in the state of Nebraska. After many flight delays and cancellations, it was finally nice to meet Pam and Anita (two Nebraska State Officers) at the Lincoln airport. Over the next few days, I would be spending time with some fabulous FFA members at the COLT conference. Some members that I had the pleasure of spending time with were Alicia, Shar, Megan and Patrick. Austin and I raced paddleboats one afternoon against another team and we could have beaten them if our boat hadn't turned sideways at the last minute. Along with the rest of the Nebraska State Officer team: Philip, Lauren, Shelly, Jon and Abbie, I also hung out with the South Dakota State Officer team who are going to do a fabulous job serving the South Dakota Association...you guys rock!

The COLT conference was absolutely wonderful. My favorite part of the whole conference was the reflections at the end of the conference. Without a doubt, I was motivated to Unlock, Explore and Discover all the opportunities that our organization has to offer.

### May 19, 2004

Where I'll be next week: Laurel, Mississippi; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

*"Those who don't believe in magic will never find it" – Roald Dahl*

This quote is very fitting because the last ten days I have been in College Station, Texas, preparing for the National Leadership Conference for State Officers (NLCSO). The theme for this year's conference is "Creating the Magic". The first part of my time in Texas was spent with my teammates practicing over and over the curriculum in front of each other and our coaches. We had intense preparation since we were going to be teaching part of a summer course at Texas A&M. We all knew that teaching college students was going to be very exciting. Luckily, our time practicing was not all work, we managed to have a little bit of fun as well. A friend of our team, Dustin Clark, attends school at A&M and set up a cool campus tour for our team. We walked on Kyle Field and learned about all of the cool





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traditions that make up Texas A&M. We were fortunate that Jack (the newly-elected student body president) as well as Mr. Bobby Tucker (a past national officer who works at A&M) were able to join us on our campus tour. Another evening was spent with Casey's mom and grandmother – they are such wonderful people. In fact, we all call his grandmother, "Grandma Evelyn".

After much practice, it was finally time to meet our class of college students. I must admit I was a little nervous. But, it didn't take long to see that my and Anne's class was going to be great. Some of our students were Carrie, Megan, J.D., Terrance, Kristi, Brandy, John, Bryce, Keith, Bobby, Mikala, Greg, Lee and many others. A very special thank you to all the wonderful people at Texas A&M. I will miss you guys a lot! After spending four days together, my team went out to dinner with some of the students from our classes. This was an awesome experience and I felt like I was back in college. Here's a picture of me, J.D. and D.D – two guards on the Aggie Football team. They were just a little bigger than me.



As I write this journal, I am in the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport waiting on my plane to Jackson, Mississippi. I am very pumped about seeing my family in just a few short hours. Hope that you all are spending time with the people you love and value so much.

**May 5-8**

**Where I'll be next week: College Station, Texas**

*"May your mind ever sparkle like a star, your heart remain pure as new fallen snow, and your spirit forever sense the wonderment of a child." –Mary Summer Rain*

Dunkin' Donuts, Del's Lemonade and the seashore were just a few things I experienced at the Rhode Island state convention. During my time at the convention, I met Shane, Joe, Ashley and Karen who were serving as the 2003-2004 state officers. The first day I was there was the day of the state career development events. Rhode Island holds interesting demonstration contests and there were many awesome demonstrations. Some of the coolest ones I saw included: Erin from EWG who demonstrated a specific type of saddle riding; Gina who demonstrated dog training and grooming along with her dog, Geeva;



Maggie with her rabbit, Powder; and John with his ag mechanics





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demonstration. Others who did a terrific job at were Alley and Kelly from EWG who were awarded scholarships to WLC this summer. After the day of career development events was done, the state officers and their friend, John, took me to dinner at Harbor Side Restaurant. This restaurant overlooked a bay and we enjoyed some great seafood. Afterward, we went back to Shane's house and watched the finale of "Friends"! The next day, I had the privilege of going to Narragansett High School to tour their FFA program. Will, Mike and Tara gave me a great tour of the greenhouses. Good luck with your plant sale. Another thing that the Narragansett chapter does is a maple syrup sale. They have their own "Sugar Shack" where they make the syrup to sale to the local community. Thank you so much for my maple syrup. Finally, that evening the awards banquet was held at Scituate High School for the awards banquet. The ag teacher, Mr. Lewis gave me a fantastic tour of the school's facility. Some of the ag mechanics projects just blew me away. During the awards banquet, I won a door prize –yay! The doorprize happened to be...a plant. Considering I had to fly out the next morning, I was unable to bring it with me. Luckily, Nicole offered to take care of it and she even named it "Fuzzy". I enjoyed my time in the northeast and look forward to continuing my friendships there. Thank you all so much for everything.



**April 27, 2004**

**Where I'll be next week: Rhode Island /Texas**

*"Take pride in what you do. The kind of pride I'm talking about is not the arrogant puffed-up kind; it's just the whole idea of caring-fiercely caring. – Red Aurbach*

FFA state conventions continue to amaze me. Maryland was the sixth state convention that I've had the pleasure of attending and the people care so much. I can't help but think about what the world would be like if everyone took as much pride in their jobs as FFA members, state officers and state staff. While I was in Maryland, I met Chris, Jeana, Nicole, Katie and Daniell who were serving as state officers. Bud, Luke, JT, Julie, Katie and Oscar were state officer candidates who were a great help to the state officers throughout convention. Some chapters that I got to hang with were Walkersville, Liganore, Easton, Fredrick, Harford, Clear Spring and many more. A special thanks to Easton chapter and



Kevin, Amy and Mrs. Martette, who taught me how to make "Corny Crafts". Also while I was there, I met the Pennsylvania state officers. Eric, Becky, Amber, Amy and Bernie are preparing for their convention in June. It was great to meet some of Javier's friends. A really cool thing about Maryland's convention is that they rent out a bowling alley and everyone gets to go bowling. It's





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called duckpin bowling. The pins are very short and the ball is very small. It is so much fun. At the bowling alley, I had a chance to try some Old Bay. Old Bay is the special type of seasoning only found around Maryland. It is very good. I was able to bring some home and I want to try it on some Mississippi catfish.

**April 21-25**

**Where I'll be next week: Maryland**

**We are all born originals – why is it that so many of us die copies?- Edward Young**

These past few days I have seen so many original things that I've never seen before. I had the opportunity to visit the last frontier of Alaska. There are no words to describe my experiences there. While I was there, I went to the North Pole (that's right, it does exist). I fed reindeer and saw some moose. I also spent some time with great FFA Chapters like Palmer, Polaris, Homer, Fairbanks and many others. The state officers: Jessica, Brad, Logan, Theresa, Lynette and Matt did a terrific job helping the members of Alaska see the great opportunities that were available to them. Some other fabulous friends that I made while in Alaska were Lem, Lyndsay and Candace. Lem and Lyndsay are originally from Alaska and they acted as my official tour guides at times. Candace was the visiting state officer from Washington who was also one of my roommates! Because natural resources are so abundant in the state, the Envirothon is a huge event. I went out to some of the locations and was so impressed by what the students were accomplishing. Good luck to all the teams that will be representing Alaska at national convention. I truly look forward to seeing you all again. I thoroughly enjoyed my time spent with each of you.

**April 12, 2004**

**Where I'll be next week: Home/Alaska**

I'm ready for my close-up. (Yeah, right). The past couple of days our team has been pretending to know how to model for the FFA Blue Catalog. We have gotten to wear some really cool clothes and take some very funny pictures. This has been one of those times that I just really appreciate the people on my team. They are so funny and we really do have a wonderful time together. The only downfall to the photo shoot was that it was so cold in Indiana. Stacia and I had to wear shorts and tank tops for some pictures and it was freezing! But all in all, we have made some great memories together that I know I'll cherish from now on. After the photo shoot, I came home to Mississippi!! My home chapter, Northeast Jones, had their chapter FFA banquet and it was a treat for me to go. I saw so many friends and it's always nice to spend time with my chapter advisors, Mr. Coker and Mr. Buchanan. One unique thing about our chapter banquet is that we have an alumni auction in the beginning. Even more unique is that Mr. Coker serves as the auctioneer. O.K., so this next part is pretty random but speaking of unique – I have a question for you. How do you catch a unique rabbit?? Answer: U neek up on him..hahaha. Corny, yes I know. But you have to admit it was quiet humorous. For more random Christy jokes – tune in next week.



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Where I'll be next week: Indianapolis, Indiana –with my whole team!!!

### April 5, 2004

*Those you followed passionately, gladly and zealously have made you feel like somebody. It wasn't merely the job title or power – they somehow made you feel terrific to be around them. – Irwin Federman*

I found this quote to be exceptionally true as I spent some time with family and friends both in Mississippi and Florida. Almost two months has passed since I had seen my family. It felt so good to walk into the airport and see my mom and grandmother waiting for me. While I was home, I caught up on some sleep, went shopping (a hobby that I have missed) and caught up with some old friends. One of my advisors, Mr. Buchanan, just recently purchased his first home. A few of my chapter's alumni members, as well as my dad and me, surprised him with a house warming party. The house overlooks a beautiful lake and it felt so good to be hanging out with my chapter again.

Congratulations again, Mr. Buchanan, on your new house! Also, while I was at home, I went and saw Ms. Amy, one of my best friends, as well as Mississippi's FFA State Coordinator. She just had the most beautiful baby and she named her Morgan Claire. Claire is my middle name so I was very pumped about seeing her and getting to hold her. She is the cutest baby ever! Two times while I was at home, I sat on my grandmother's back porch all afternoon. The weather was great and we sat and talked about how great life really is.

After a few days at home, I spent some time with friends in Gainesville, Florida. Emily Hand and Devin Dotson picked me up at the airport and we headed to the beach! We had a great time looking for shark's teeth and taking funny pictures. I was also pretty excited to see a good friend, Barrett Keene. We spent one day looking at the University of Florida's campus and enjoying some good B-B-Q. One night, a bunch of fabulous people like my friends-Tate, Rudy, Barrett, Ronnie, Kelly, Devin, Emily, Erica, Kris, Stephanie, Rebecca and several others went to Blue Run, a large spring fed river. We hung out most of the night laughing and dancing. Thank you to Rudy – who taught me how to salsa! Blue Run must be one of the most beautiful places I've ever seen. Finally, on Sunday, Barrett, Rudy, Justin and I went to First Baptist Church of Achula. I can't express what a blessing it was for me to be in church on a Sunday morning.

As I reflect back on the past two weeks, I can easily say that all of these are the people that make me feel terrific just to be around them. I am so thankful that each one of them is a part of my life.

### April 1, 2004

What a blast I had at Nevada's FFA State Convention! When I arrived in Reno, I learned that I would be rooming with Lindsay Walsh – the California State Treasurer. We had such a great time hanging out. Some other cool people that I met while I was there were George, Michelle, Cameron, Amy, Trent (from Idaho) and Eric (from Washington). Also, the state officers in Nevada are AWESOME! Casey, Garrett, Lauren, Rachel, Leslie and



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Dylan. We all have a Reno 911 (that is one of my brother and I's favorite shows) connection. To all the state officers – “Somebody, help me”—haha!  
One of my favorite parts of convention was when we went rollerskating. That's right, the entire convention rents out the local roller rink and everyone goes skating. It was so much fun. I have never done anything like that at a convention before. Those guys really know how to have a good time. It had been a long time since I had gone skating, so I held close to the wall (I'm definitely no daredevil). Nevada FFA- Thank you so much for your wonderful hospitality. I had such a fabulous time and hope to come back very soon!

### **March 17, 2004**

*“Park the Car in Harvard Yard and pay the man a quarter” – New England Saying*

If you can't already tell by the quote, the past three days I have been in New England where the Massachusetts FFA Convention was in full swing. I arrived in Sturbridge, Mass., to find the state officers, Tim, Tiesha, Danielle, Rachel and Stephanie, in convention preparation mode. Massachusetts is also very fortunate to have the help of some dedicated alumni who make convention possible. They were all eagerly anticipating the arrival of more than three hundred members for the 74th FFA State Convention.

During the first general session, I watched talent acts such as the Smith County Cow competed for the coveted talent trophy. Also, I was excited to see four greenhand FFA members stand in front of the entire convention and recite the creed. Congratulations to Laura who ended up placing first. Also thank you to the Essex FFA Chapter for letting me sit with y'all during the opening session. Some chapters that I spent time with included the Norfolk Chapter, the Cape Cod Tech Chapter, Smith, Silver Lake and Bristol. All of you were really nice to get to know.

One of my favorite parts of the Massachusetts FFA Convention was the banquet. You could feel the excitement as all the convention participants entered the banquet hall to see which chapter would take home the most awards. This awards banquet was unlike any other. During the meal, the DJ would play songs and members would get out of their chairs and dance! It was a wicked good time. (For those not affiliated with New England –*wicked* – is a good thing!)

Finally, the last session was a real tearjerker. We listened to state officer retiring addresses and watched as state president, Timothy Roy, presented his final farewell to the Massachusetts FFA. I know that the 2003-2004 team will be greatly missed.

However, with each ending comes a bright new beginning. Congratulations to the new 2004-2005 state FFA officer team. I was able spend some time with the newly elected officers shortly after their election. The excitement and enthusiasm they have will definitely continue the great tradition of Massachusetts FFA.

### **March 12, 2004**



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*A lot of people have gone farther than they thought they could because someone else thought they could. --Zig Ziglar*

I've spent these past few days in the great state of Michigan at their State FFA convention. When I arrived, past national officer, Corey Flournoy was there to pick me up. After spending a couple of hours at the hotel to get ready for the second general session, we headed over to the Wharton Center where convention was held. This was my first convention of the year and it felt so great to walk in and see hundreds of FFA jackets. The excitement and magic of convention was definitely in the air. One highlight of my time in Michigan was meeting the state officers. Ryan, Jason, Mike, Amanda, Seth, Katy, Katie, Ryan M, Nicole, Bryan and Julia are great people who have worked hard this past year to serve the members of their association. Congratulations on an awesome year. I know that each of you made your mark as well as an extreme impact on Michigan FFA. After the third session, it was time to head to the dance! Thanks to Tiffany, Hannah and Becca for hanging out with me. Oh, and I don't know if any of you have ever done the "alligator" – but you should really give it a try. The next morning, the convention delegates went into the city of Lansing to meet with their state legislators and thank them for their continued support of agricultural education. Michigan's capital building is a National Historical Landmark and I got chills as we all stood in the rotunda and sang "God Bless America". It was a very inspirational moment.

Some other great friends that I saw while at convention were Lindsey Calhoun and Abby Yochum, Ohio FFA state officers. Also, Dustin Clark and Seth Heinert, past national officers were visiting convention as well.

During the sixth general session, I watched as Aaron and Jenna competed in the finals of the Prepared Public Speaking Contest. Jenna's speech was about the "Life Cycle of the Dairy Cow" and Aaron's was "Country of Origin Labeling". Both did an outstanding job. Congratulations to Aaron who will be representing Michigan at National FFA Convention.

At the 8th general session, I saw the 2004-2005 State Officers elected! I know that they will continue the tradition of excellence in Michigan. Thank you very much for having me at your state convention. I had such a wonderful time and have many memories!

**February 26, 2004**

**Where I'll be next week: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania**

Happy FFA Week! I have spent my FFA week in the beautiful states of Oregon and Washington. This was my first trip to the northwest and it is definitely a place I hope to visit again. On Monday, I was in Oregon and visited the North Clackamas Land Lab. This chapter has its own small farm. They have cattle, sheep, rabbits as well as several greenhouses. The chapter is located in the suburbs of Portland! Expensive houses surrounded the farm. After North Clackamas, we headed to Canby FFA Chapter, where I met some of the Oregon State Officers Anna, Seth and Tyler. Jake, the chapter president, and Mr. Sherman, the chapter advisor, gave me a tour of the new facilities. Canby FFA is one of the most technologically advanced chapters I have ever seen. Students are involved in everything from agriculture literacy to hydroponics to plant micro-propagation. I was even able to take a tissue culture.



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After Canby, we arrived at the Molalla FFA Chapter. The Molalla FFA Alumni is terrific. They cooked a spaghetti supper and I spent some time with their members. Eryn is running for a state office—good luck! Nick and Ashley were also wonderful. The next morning I had breakfast with North Marion FFA. Their chapter grew from 5five members last year to 48 members this year. Wade and Kale have played a pretty important role in making that happen. I also met the rest of the state officer team, Dan, Shannon and Shannon. Later that day we had the chance to visit Oregon State University (Home of the Beavers). While we were there I saw a friend of mine as well as a past state officer from Oregon, Mike Folin. Mike let me go to a really cool college communications class with him. It was a really good feeling to be back in a college atmosphere. I had kind of forgotten what that was like. The last visit of the night was at the Dayton FFA Chapter. I got a chance to know Katie, the chapter president as well as some other great people. They were the kind of chapter that makes FFA so enjoyable. Thank you Dayton for such a great visit. Oregon FFA- Have a great time as you “Bring It Home” to Corvallis for State Convention.

On Wednesday, I met up with the Washington state officers, Anne and Laura. Those girls are too cool. Laura and Anne: Thank you so much for showing me your amazing hearts! I needed all of our “girl” talk. While in Washington, I visited the Onalaska chapter who is preparing to go to an aquaculture conference in Hawaii. While I was there I saw 5,000 rainbow trout. Then we headed to Rochester who was having FFA Open House! We had a hamburger cookout and the chapter officers told us how FFA will “ROCK YOU”. Thursday, we visited the Washington State Capital and Winlock FFA. Winlock bestowed 19 discovery degrees. You guys rock. As I write this journal entry, I am getting ready to go play a game of donkey basketball at the Rainier FFA Chapter. I’ve never played Donkey basketball so I’ll let ya know how it goes! Have a fabulous day.

**February 18, 2004**

**Where I’ll be next week: Oregon/ Washington for FFA Week**

Hello All. For the past few days I have been traveling quite extensively. This past Friday, the team flew from Indianapolis to Denver, Colorado. Mr. John Rakestraw, who is currently the Chair of the National FFA Foundation Sponsor’s Board, lives there. When we arrived in Denver, we drove to Boulder and checked into our hotel rooms for a fabulous weekend. On Valentine’s Day, we headed up to Eldora Ski Resort. It was probably one of the coolest Valentine’s day ever. The weather was absolutely beautiful. Stacia, Jason (Regional Director of the FFA Foundation) and I decided that we had graduated from all those bunny slopes and started looking for some real ski action. Well, we found it and it wasn’t what we were expecting. The slope we “graduated” to was filled with huge snow moguls. Needless to say many of us ate some snow on that slope. That night we met the St. Vrain FFA Chapter and the Rakestraws for dinner. I really enjoyed getting to know Eric, Nia, Jerilyn and Kaschia, Jeff and Kelly. The St. Vrain chapter just recently go a new FFA advisor and they have many exciting things planned for the upcoming years. They are actually in the process of planning a modern livestock facility for the entire chapter to use. Good Luck guys!

On Sunday night, I headed to St. Louis, Missouri, to begin my Business and Industry Tour. Monday afternoon, Ryan and Kenan (two Illinois State Officers) met me to help out



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with the tour. Ryan and Kenan – Thank you so much for all of your help. I loved our great conversations and am so proud that Illinois FFA has the two of you serving them! Together we visited many companies including Monsanto, Purina Mills, Solea and Marketing Horizons. At Monsanto, we had the opportunity to visit their research facility. On this tour, we were able to briefly see how researchers inject biotechnology into different plant tissues. We also saw the process for testing and researching. Today, I even got to visit the St. Louis arch. I rode this tiny tram car up the entire arch and spent some time at the top admiring beautiful St. Louis! After visiting with some of our sponsors, there is not a doubt in my mind about how much they care not only about supporting agriculture education and the FFA, but how much they care about continuing to develop FFA members as successful people. Until next time...

**Where I'll be next week: Denver**  
February 6

Hajimemashite! (*Japanese for "How do you do?"*) The past ten days have been a once in a lifetime opportunity. The five of us left January 26 headed to Tokyo, Japan. It was a bittersweet departure as we were excited about the trip but also missed Javier very much. The trip was eleven hours long but during the flight we flew over the northern tip of Alaska and the view was breathtaking. Since Japan is almost a full day ahead of the United States, we arrived at Tokyo-Narita airport on January 28. The first thing we did was meet our humble, honest, decent guide, Hiro. As we entered Tokyo, Hiro shared with us some history and also pointed out Mt. Fuji in the distance. Some of my experiences in Tokyo included riding the Japanese subway where people are stuffed in like sardines. Once on the subway, a little Japanese woman actually pushed Amy off of the train and I had to grab her right before the doors shut. Lucky for Amy she's not still in Tokyo. We spent a day at the American Embassy learning customs and economics of Japan. We visited Mitsui LTD., who sponsors the trip, and learned a great deal about the company as well as international trade and the importance of positive relationships between the United States and Japan. Mitsui is truly a dynamic corporation that is helping to secure a bright future for the agriculture industry through partnerships, innovation, and technology. One of my favorite parts of Tokyo was the Tsukiji Fish Market. This fish market is eleven times bigger than the market in New York City. It is by far the largest market in the world. We had to be at the market by 6 a.m. so we could see the tuna auction. We saw tuna that weighed up to 200lbs. We also saw live octopus, squid, eel, shrimp and almost any other sea creature you could possibly imagine. After our visit to the market, guess where we went for breakfast? That's right—to a sushi restaurant. I wasn't sure what to think because I was certain that I had just seen all of this food alive an hour before. Now it was on rice and going around on a conveyor belt. Casey puts us all to shame when it comes to eating sushi. He really likes it. Later that day we visited Tokyo Metropolitan Nosan High School. This is Tokyo's agricultural high school. The FFJ officers along with faculty gave us a wonderful tour of the school that included canning, ham smoking and fermentation facilities as well as greenhouses, vegetable gardens and flower gardens. Thank you Nosan High School for such a wonderful afternoon. While in Tokyo, we had the chance to visit some farms as well. Mr. Miyauchi grows Korean lettuce, chives and Japanese pears. Then we visited Mr.



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Tanaka's rice and strawberry farm. Mr. Tanaka explained to us the national surplus of rice as well as a rice tracking system that had recently been implemented by the Japanese government. After a great experience in Tokyo, we got on a bullet train and headed to Kyoto. The bullet trains average about 200 mph. Once we went sixty miles in twenty minutes. While in Kyoto we visited several of Mitsui's branch operations such as Chitto Futo ,a company that operates an unloading dock and warehouse operation and Yanmar , a company that builds diesel engines for cars to tractors. All of the girls with ringleader, Jana Jaure, did a lot of shopping at the Yen Store. Basically, a Yen Store is what we would call a "dollar store" and they are so much fun to shop. During our entire trip, we found at least four different ones. After a few days in Kyoto, we went by local train to Tajima. Tajima is absolutely beautiful. It is located in the mountains about an hour from the Sea of Japan. There at Tajima Agricultural High School, we met our host families! Amy and I lived together with our host family and our host sister's name was Kaori. Her parents owned a bed and breakfast in the mountains and the guests were usually skiers visiting for the weekend. Living with a host family was a very cultural experience for Amy and I. We sat on the floor for all of our meals. Many of our meals included a whole (head and all) raw fish, and we also slept on futons. Our family was so incredibly sweet. They didn't speak much English so the whole weekend was like a huge game of charades. It was so much fun to see the rest of the team after our first night with the host families and hear all of their unique experiences. At Tajima High School, we were given a tour of the school and livestock facilities as well as tours of the Japanese Agricultural Cooperation, a strawberry farm and a Tajima beef cattle farm. At the strawberry farm, we were given little plastic containers filled with sweetened and condensed milk and let into the greenhouse to eat as many strawberries as we wanted. That was a definite highlight of the trip for me! We met so many great people at Tajima like Principal Okada, Tabata Sensei, and Alex who is an American working at Tajima High School through the Japanese Exchange Teacher Program. Thank you so much to our host families for embracing us as part of your family and to Tajima High School for your hospitality. I had an amazing time! From Tajima, we left by train going to Osaka. We would spend the next night in Osaka before we departed back to America. Also, I have to say a special thank you to my teammates who I find more incredible all the time, our chaperones, Jana Jaure and Anna Melodia for being so much fun, and Hiro, who allowed us to really experience Japan and understand the culture not just observe it. On the train to Osaka, I thought a lot about the entire trip. I came to the conclusion that when you take all the good experiences such as the people, the history, the kindness, the culture and you take the experiences that forced me to get out of my comfort zone such as the sushi, the bathhouses, and the language barrier then you get this amazing mixture which can only be seen as the remarkable beauty of Japan.

**Where I'll be next week- Nihon aka Japan!!  
January 26, 2004**

*"We are the music-makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams. We are the movers and shakers of the world forever it seems."- Arthur O'Shaughnessy*



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For the past few days, I have definitely felt like a “mover and a shaker”. Last week was spent with the team in Indianapolis. It was a good workweek for all of us. I spent my time finishing up my state convention speech and looking at workshop material. Also on Friday, I had the chance to have lunch with my FFA mentor –Jan Ferris- at a great Italian restaurant (I love pasta!). We had a great time with a few of the other officers and their mentors. Friday evening, I flew to State College, Pennsylvania. That weekend I prepared for the upcoming board meeting and had a little rest and relaxation with some very special people. On Tuesday, I flew into Washington, D.C., to meet with my team to begin official preparation for the National FFA Board of Directors meeting. However, Wednesday was spent at the Washington, D.C., children’s museum learning about the Japanese culture. We are heading to Japan next Tuesday for an international experience. It was very fun and interesting to learn some Japanese phrases and learn to eat raw tuna (ok, so I only took one bite, but that still counts). Some parts of the day I felt like I was on a big Fear Factor episode. I wouldn’t have traded the opportunity for the world. This weekend will be spent in shaping policy for our organization that hopefully will have a benefit that touches all of our students. Hope you have a great weekend! Until next time...

### **Where I’ll be next week: Indianapolis, IN January 5-9 Georgia Experience State**

*There is an emanation from the heart in genuine hospitality which cannot be described, but is immediately felt and puts the stranger at once at his ease. -- Washington Irving.*

This quote definitely describes the great hospitality that I received while in Georgia this past week. My team and I arrived in Albany, Georgia, at 1:30 in the afternoon on Monday, January fifth. We began our journey in cold Indianapolis and arrived in sunny, sixty degree weather Georgia! Boy, do I love southern weather! As soon as we arrived, we headed over to Monroe High School. Monroe High School greeted us with an incredible welcome reception. They are currently in the process of developing their FFA Chapter and with the support of their community. I have no doubt they will succeed in their efforts. Then our team traveled to Tifton, Georgia, home of the Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. We met with schools from all the surrounding areas and we were able to hang out with some pretty cool Georgia State officers- Shelby and Ashley. Those two are a ton of fun. It was also great to talk to Sean , Renee’, Ben, and Rand. Thanks southern Georgia for the great time.

We also spent time at Irwin County High School in Ocilla, Georgia. While we were there, Mr. Wilkinson (Georgia executive secretary) and Mr. Lastly (Georgia program manager) treated us to a hometown restaurant with some amazing southern food. That is definitely one thing I miss about not being home all the time ---the FOOD!

Then it was time to head up to north Georgia. We traveled to Athens and saw University of Georgia’s campus. We grabbed some ice cream at a local shop called “The Varsity” with state officers Cliff and Cathy as well as a past state officer Rachel and Mrs. White



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who works with Georgia Ag Ed. While there we learned all about the history of the Georgia mascot “Uga”.

One morning we visited the Franklin FFA Chapter. Their chapter has about 500 FFA members—wow. They were so kind to wake up extra early and have a fabulous breakfast waiting on us when we arrived. Kyle (chapter officer) gave a well-prepared welcome and other officers such as Will and David kept us chuckling. Thanks to Hannah for sitting by me at breakfast and keeping me company.

A highlight of the trip was heading to the Georgia FFA/FCCLA camp. We had the chance to work with some chapter officers who were some of FFA’s finest. Also, at the Georgia camp, I had the opportunity to meet another state officer- Dathan. Dathan is truly one of a kind. He tells me that he can dance well, but I don’t know about that.

Another aspect of the trip was visiting the Georgia State Department of Education. It was very neat to witness the support that the Board of Education has for Georgia’s FFA Association. After the meeting, we had lunch with many key supporters including Georgia’s Commissioner of Agriculture, Mr. Tommy Irvin. Mr. Irvin is the longest serving elected official in the nation. He was such a wealth of information. History is something that I really enjoy and to listen to some of his life story was incredible for me. That night was spent at Camp John Hope working with students in leadership development workshops. Camp John Hope was a former NFA camp. I felt like I was experiencing a unique era in our organization. At the workshops, I met the remainder of the state officer team: Rodney and Hope. Rodney helped me out in my workshop by being a great participant. Hope is a senior in high school and she and I had some cool conversation over dinner.

The last day we were in Georgia was an ag teacher’s conference. While we were there, we got to spend some time answering any questions that they may have. Their state is extremely fortunate to have teachers that are so dedicated to impacting student lives. To wrap things up, Georgia was a BLAST. Thanks for all the fun, food, and good ole Southern Hospitality.

### **Where I am next week: Georgia January 4, 2004**

*What is Christmas? It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future. It is a fervent wish that every cup may overflow with blessings rich and eternal, and that every path may lead to peace.*

*--Agnes M. Pharo*

First of all, Happy New Year! I hope that each of you had a Merry Christmas and a very blessed new year. I spent the holidays back home in Mississippi. It was great to see my family and experience all the blessings that the holidays bring. As soon as my plane landed in Laurel, Miss., I was off to my first celebration. My grandmother had a huge holiday party at her house. All of my extended family was there and we had some great food. That night we played a Christmas present trading game. In this game you can either get a really good present or a not so good gift. Luckily this year, I ended up trading for a cute picture frame and some multi-colored candy corn (strange, I know). After the party, my family and I headed back to our house. The next couple of days were spent sleeping and enjoying their company. On Christmas day, my mom came and woke



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me up at 6:50 because, as she said "It's Christmas, we can't sleep late on Christmas." My brother, Cliff, and I sleepily walked into our living room where all of our presents were sitting nicely under the tree. Cliff's first present was a solid black electric guitar, which was extremely cool. Some of my favorite gifts were: Bath and Body Works Aroma Therapy, a blanket that was knitted for me by a very special lady, a FFA at 75 watch, many clothes and John Maxwell and Max Lucado books (those are my fav). I also had the chance to spend some time with my very good friends and state officer teammates at a Christmas party. We had our Christmas party at Ms. Amy (our state coordinator and good friend) and her husband, Jason's, house. My teammates and friends, David, Crystal, Meredith, Elio and Jason were also there. Guys, it was so good to see you and know that I truly treasure our relationships.

Finally, on New Year's Eve, I got on a plane headed back to Indianapolis to meet up with my team to begin preparation for our trip to Georgia. When I arrived in Indy, everyone but Javier was already here. We loaded up in the FFA van and headed to Tiffany Sanderson's house. There we spent the evening watching Dick Clark's Rockin' New Year's Eve, eating great food and playing a good game of Catch Phrase (it always surprises me just how competitive our team is).

I hope that each of you had a wonderful Christmas surrounded by the ones you love the most! Bye for now!

**Where I am next week: Mississippi  
Dec. 22, 2003**

*"Life can only be understood by looking backward, but it must be lived by looking forward"*

So many things have happened since November 1, it's hard to know where to begin. Sitting in the 10th general session of the 2003 National FFA Convention awaiting the National Officer Delegate report was probably the most nervous moment of my life. When Stuart from New Mexico called my name – I knew I was embarking on the greatest adventure of my life. After convention, my team and I went back to our homes and finished up with school. It was a bittersweet feeling as I packed my things and began preparing for the next year of my life. I was very fortunate to get to spend some wonderful time with my family and friends. Two really good friends of mine from high school, Josh and Evan, treated me to dinner and a movie. They are just two incredible, genuine people who have made my life so much fun. Also, one of my family's Christmas traditions is putting up our Christmas tree. I was a little worried that I would not get the chance to participate this year, but my family decided to put the tree up while I was at home!

The night before leaving for training was spent with my family decorating the Christmas tree and listening to Christmas carols. My youngest cousin, Abby, was so much fun to watch as she put ornaments on the tree. Sitting there that night I realized once again how incredibly blessed I am to have such a wonderful family. They are the people that remind me what family and love are all about.

After three weeks at home, we traveled to Indianapolis to begin training. The three weeks of training have introduced me to so many new ideas and new perspectives. I've



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had the opportunity to meet several people who work for the National FFA Center. It is such an amazing thing to see so many people who are dedicated to student success. We've also had some snow here in Indianapolis. Being from southern Mississippi- I consider snow a pretty rare experience. We've made some pretty funny memories as a team while we've been here in Indianapolis. We've done everything from picture scavenger hunts across town to seeing Disney on Ice to touring Convention sites in 2006 to eating at an AMAZING Italian restaurant called Maggiano's (which I strongly recommend).

I am very excited to travel to state conventions and meet new people. The first state that I will be visiting is Georgia! My entire team and I will be traveling there in January. To all you Georgia folks- I am so pumped about meeting you guys and can't wait to get there.