

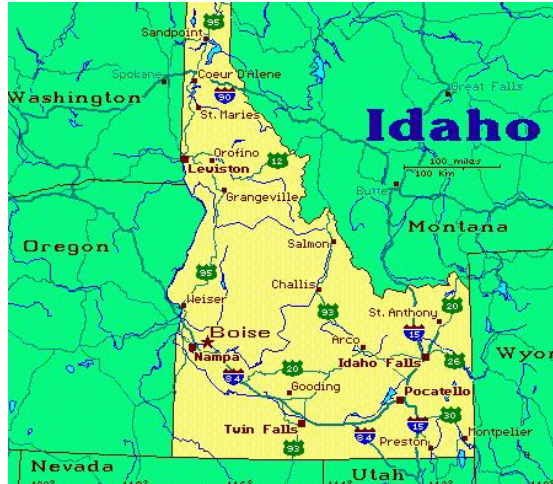


## Brian Hogue National Officer Journal

April 16<sup>th</sup>:

### Idaho State FFA Convention “FFA – Fuel the Fire “

I LOVE IDAHO!! These past few days I have been in the beautiful state of Idaho attending their State FFA Convention. I had the opportunity to visit Idaho last month for about 24 hours and during that time I fell in love with the Great State. I had a day off before convention began so I took the time to shadow Bill Whitacre at the Simplot Company in Boise. Simplot is a very large agricultural company that was started in Idaho; they produce everything from French fries, to feedlots, to fertilizer. I could really see myself returning to Idaho to work for Simplot someday. After spending the day with Simplot in Boise, I headed south to Twin Falls for the State FFA Convention. I started off the convention by heading to a local pizza joint with the State Officers. What a BLAST!!! This place was swamped with FFA members and advisors. This pizza place was amazing they had like 2000 different kinds of pizza (that might be a little embellished) but they did have a ton. Here are a few of the ones I tried:



- Steak and Potato
- Bacon Burger
- Butterfinger
- Cookies and Crème (My Favorite)
- Blueberry
- Ranch Cheese
- Ranch Pepperoni
- Ranch Chicken
- Strawberry
- Cinnamon Roll
- Idahoan (Potatoes and Cheese)
- Beef Philly
- Sour Kraut
- Chocolate Morane
- Blackberry
- Shrimp
- Hamburger Olive

Let's just say this pizza place **CHANGED MY LIFE!!!** It was a ton of fun.



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The convention was held at the College of Southern Idaho. They had over 1200 members attend convention and I think the auditorium only had a capacity for approximately 1100. Every session was packed full and over flowing with excitement and energy. It was a neat feeling. During the convention I had the amazing opportunity to meet "The Boys" from Cambridge. I had a great time sitting with them during the sessions; they were a little crazy and whole lot of fun. In between sessions you could find me and the crew from Burley hanging out in the Student Union watching our favorite show..... "Pimp My Ride." As with most state conventions, Idaho had a big dance. It was a blast learning some true Idaho dances. I was pretty terrible but I tried. During the convention I was asked to make a visit to the State Officer Candidate interviews. Idaho had a great group of State Officer Candidates and Nom Com members. I was thoroughly impressed with both groups. The nominating committee picked 8 individuals who are going to do a stellar job. Brad, Shawna, Jill, Marie, Kara and Ben are going to do some great things for Idaho FFA and Idaho Agriculture in this coming year. Speaking of agriculture, I learned a lot about Idaho agriculture while I was there. Now most people know that Idaho is famous for their potatoes but few people know that they also produce the most food size trout in the country. I was pretty surprised when I learned about their trout industry. Right after convention I was really honored to be invited to eat lunch with the Retired State Officer Team. Following lunch, a group of Past State Officers, members and State Officers headed to the Idaho Falls outside Twin Falls. It was really impressive! They said its 20X better when there's actually



been some rain. After that I traveled with Heidi Lake, recently retired State President and Idaho's National Officer Candidate, to her hometown of Burley. This was really cool since potato planting was going on while I was there. I actually got to jump in a tractor and plant an acre or so. How cool was that? Way stinkin cool!! Her family was also very kind and let me join them for a home cooked family meal. It was not only delicious but very refreshing compared to my typical fast food dinner.

I just want to thank everyone who made my visit to Idaho such a wonderful experience. A special thanks to the North Gem, Meridian, Rigby, Cambridge, Burley, and Kuna Chapters for going out of there way to make me feel welcome.



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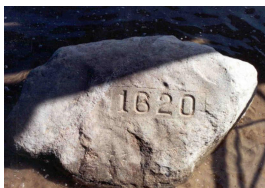
April 11<sup>th</sup>:

### Rhode Island State Convention “An Ocean Full of Opportunity”

Well, my travels this week took me to the Smallest State in the Union, Rhode Island. It was so fun attending Rhode Island's State FFA Convention, which was the smallest state convention I would attend as a National Officer. The thing that I enjoyed most about their convention was that I had the opportunity to meet everybody. It was really neat!! I had the opportunity to tour the local high school and agriculture education department where the convention was being held. The advisor and students had custom built a machine that automatically fills trays with soil for the greenhouse. I was really impressed with the quality and ingenuity they had in the project. After touring, the convention got started. It was so cool to see the FFA Alumni and Association give out over \$9,000 in scholarships and awards. That was pretty impressive considering there was a little less than 80 students at the Convention. It seemed everyone was walking away with something, which was really neat. It was exciting to watch a new team of State Officers get elected. With Ryan, Allison, Kaitlin, Kate, Catherine and William at the helm, Rhode Island FFA will soar to new heights this coming year.



After convention a number of Past State Officers, New Elected State Officers, and members headed to a local restaurant for a late night snack. It was a good time to just sit back, relax and EAT. After some great conversation and good food I said my goodbyes and headed on my way back to my hotel. As I drove, I got a call on my cell phone from Ryan, the Newly Elected President, asking me what hotel I was staying at in Providence. I told him it was the Comfort Inn. He then blurted out, IT'S ON FIRE!!! What? My Hotel? I kind of sped up and hurried back to the hotel. As I pulled in I was greeted by 20-25 fire trucks and flames coming out of the windows of the hotel. Let's just say I was a little scared, everything I had was in the hotel. My workshop supplies, my clothes, my laptop, everything was in that room!! After about 4 hours they let us back into our rooms to assess the damage. Luckily all I had was water damage from the automatic water sprinklers. My laptop was not harmed at all since I threw my jacket over it as I left the room earlier that day. I was really LUCKY. Within 10 hours the hotel had washed all my clothes and returned them to me. It was pretty remarkable.



The next day I got in my rental car and headed for Massachusetts for some good ole' drive time and sight seeing. I visited Plymouth Rock, the place where Pilgrims first set foot on America in 1620. What a cool experience it was to be in a place so rich in history. As I toured the town I visited shops, went through a couple





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museums and even bought some souvenirs. After spending a couple hours in Plymouth I got back in the car and headed for Cape Cod. The drive was absolutely beautiful. It was really neat to experience that part of the country. During my drive I would stop at the towns that host minor league baseball players during the summer months. I even got out and walked around some of the baseball fields where players like Cal Ripken Jr. and Nolan Ryan once played. Myself being a huge baseball fan, that was so stinkin cool. After spending the entire day driving up and down the Cape I headed back to Rhode Island to meet back up with some FFA members from Rhode Island. They had offered to take me on a tour around Rhode Island before I had to head out. The next day we spent the entire day touring different parts of Rhode Island. It was amazing!! I had no idea Rhode Island, being as small as it is, could be so BEAUTIFUL and SCENIC. We started off the day traveling over the enormous Newport Bridge. They took to this beautiful



lighthouse and it was so neat to go down to the ocean and get soaked by the waves crashing into the rocks around the lighthouse. We spent most of our time in Newport. Newport is home to several enormous mansions built in back in the 1890's. We even stopped and took a tour of one of the largest and most famous, The Breakers. This mansion has over 70 rooms, it is absolutely breath taking. We couldn't believe that this house was built for a family of seven. And it was just their summer home ..... their SUMMER HOME! That's out of control!

After grabbing a really late lunch/really early dinner we headed in different directions. It was really, really cool getting to spend that time with the Rhode Island FFA members. I am really thankful and appreciative that they took time out of their day to make sure I experienced the true Rhode Island. I can't wait to someday return to Rhode Island to experience the State's beauty and simply wonderful people. Thank you to everyone in Rhode Island who made my visit to the East Coast a true highlight of my life. Thank You.



### March 25, 2005

This evening I arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska, to attend Nebraska's State Convention. I have been really looking forward to Nebraska's Convention. I have heard nothing but great things about the Nebraska members and to top it off Nebraska is one of my favorite states. I had the opportunity to start off the convention helping out with the Senior Parliamentary Procedure Contest. Holy Cow, was it intense!! I was so impressed

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not only by the talent of the teams I watched but the overall seriousness and competitive spirit. It was very obvious that each team had put in a tremendous amount of time and effort. That next morning I had the opportunity to eat breakfast with chapter members and their district's senator. What a neat experience it was to watch members interact with their senators. Nebraska FFA should be very proud at the professionalism and maturity the members displayed with their legislators. A group of students and I then headed over to the capitol; there members were welcomed by former Nebraska State FFA President and now Senator for District 47, Sen. Philip Erdman. Later, the Speaker of the House introduced all the students on the floor, which was really cool.

After beginning to contemplate eating my own arm, Tanner and the boys from Fullerton were kind enough to let me accompany them to Applebee's for dinner. After some amazing chicken fried steak I headed to the University of Nebraska bookstore to get properly equipped with a CORNHUSKER hat and shirt. After that I headed over to Pershing Auditorium for the third general session. There I sat with Tyler and Nora from the Rock City FFA Chapter. A ton of things happened during that session, my favorite was getting to watch the Proficiency Award Pageant. I was really overwhelmed by the number of students who had great SAE projects in Nebraska.

My favorite day of the convention came on Friday. I started my morning by speaking with more than 300 excited, motivated and anxious middle school members. The middle school members were at the state convention getting ready to participate in a FFA Quiz Bowl and FFA Experiential Activity. Before the activities started I had a chance to hang out with the Creighton FFA middle school members. What a blast they were!! I came back and watched those same students demolish over 100 Papa John's Pizzas, which was truly remarkable.

The conference was brought to a close by a wonderful sixth and final session. At the session we have the opportunity to listen to legendary Cornhusker football coach and now U.S Congressman, Tom Osborne. I had the awesome experience of getting to shake hands with over 450 State Degree Recipients. I could not believe how many members had reached the prestigious degree. One of my favorite moments during the session was the naming of the State Stars. I can't imagine the excitement that those students felt during the announcement. Speaking of excitement and nervousness, seven new state officers were elected to serve the Cornhusker state. It was a really great way to end a really great convention.

After the convention closed everyone changed real quick and headed to East Campus for the big dance. Not being a real good dancer I kind of headed for the seats on the side. There I met Trisha, from the Mead Chapter, we had a great talk about growing up in Mead and all the activities she is involved in. She even trusted me enough to teach her how to swing. It went pretty well until we started to try doing flips and stuff. I am pretty sure she will never try swinging again; I kind of ruined it for her. YIKES!! It was a total blast to participate with entire group as we danced the Caddy Shack dance. I had no idea there was a dance to that song. After dancing for more than two hours they kicked us out. The past state officers and newly elected state president ran over to IHOP's to partake in an early breakfast. (If you ever go to IHOP's get the Ruity Tuity Fresh and Fruity. Its amazing, it'll change your life.)



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I just wanted to thank all the chapters: Alliance, Elgin, North Bend, Rock City, Creighton, Fullerton and all the members for truly being so kind and welcoming. I can't wait to return to the great cornhusker state of Nebraska.

**January 25, 2005**

Read all about our trip to Japan! [http://www.ffa.org/students/documents/no\\_japan.pdf](http://www.ffa.org/students/documents/no_japan.pdf)

**January 14, 2005**

**Where I'll be next week: Washington, D.C.**



**Howdy everyone!!** This past week was an absolute blast. The entire national officer team had the opportunity to travel to Georgia for the week for our Experience Week training. We flew into Atlanta on Sunday and traveled to the Georgia FFA/FCCLA Camp. What an amazing facility Georgia FFA has, its members and staff have something to be very proud of.

The next morning we had the opportunity to visit the Governor's Mansion outside Atlanta. While at the Governor's Mansion we met with the Governor Sonny Purdue and presented him with his Honorary American Degree. Georgia should feel fortunate to have someone in that office that believes and understands the importance of FFA and Agriculture Education. After some traditional Georgia cuisine, we headed to the historic town of Plains, hometown of President Carter. Later that evening we attended the Multi-Chapter Leadership Assembly at the high school where Carter attended school. Emily presented a great workshop about production agriculture. Following the workshop I had the opportunity to talk with members about the importance of appreciating and being kind to the people who we interact with everyday.



On Tuesday, we traveled to Rochelle, Georgia, hometown of Rachael McCall, your Southern Region Vice President. While visiting her high school, Wilcox County, Rachael talked during an entire school assembly about the importance of taking risks and going for things we are passionate about in our everyday lives. Following the assembly we had an amazing reception, complete with a boatload of Georgia grub. The chapter officers presented each of us with a basket filled with products produced in the area. They were wonderful, THANK YOU! After that we headed down the road to Alamo, Georgia, and Wheeler County High School. After having lunch with the chapter officers, Jackie presented a funny and exciting workshop. We ended our visit with a special treat...Justine had the opportunity to talk with the entire eighth grade about appreciating the great things we all have in our lives. They were a great group of



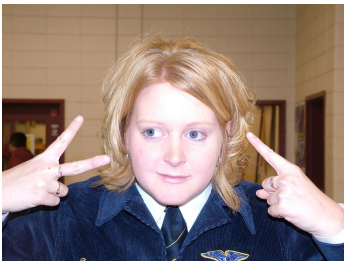


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students. Once we were back on the road, we headed for Toombs County High School, for another Multi-Chapter Leadership Activity. Following a remarkable meal and a great speech by Jay, we had the opportunity to work with the chapter members on the significance of goal setting and how it can really impact our lives.

Wednesday we headed to Springfield, Georgia, and Effingham High School. Emily presented her entertaining keynote address on the pride and passions in our lives to the entire chapter. Jay and Justine then had the

opportunity to work with two different classes. While that was going on, Rachael and I slipped away to the Effingham Middle School where we had a BLAST working with sixth-graders on their first day of their agriculture education class. After getting back to the high school we headed down the road to South Effingham High School. There we had a "Low Country Boil" with fresh boiled shrimp, potatoes, cornbread and sweet tea. Jackie and I then had the opportunity to work with the students through a workshop and a speech. Following our visit to South Effingham High we headed to the beautiful city of Savannah, Georgia, where we would spend the evening.



Thursday we headed toward Macon, Georgia, home of the Georgia Farm Bureau Headquarters. During our visit to the Georgia FB we had the chance to meet and eat lunch with Georgia FB President, Wayne Dollar. We left there and did a couple TV interviews with local stations. Then we headed back to our temporary home at the Georgia FFA Camp.

Friday we started off by visiting the Luella High School and the Luella FFA Chapter. Rachael presented a great workshop on how communication is so important in our daily lives and touched on ways we could improve our

communication skills. Then the white van filled with crazy national officers headed to the capital city of Atlanta. Once there, we met with Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture,



Tommy Irvin. Then we were guests at a lunch sponsored by the Georgia Agribusiness Council, and had lunch with the father of FFA members, Ward and Caroline Black of the Jackson County FFA Chapter. Mr. Black is currently the President of the Agribusiness Council. After lunch we headed back to the camp to prepare for the Georgia Ag-Ed Hall of Fame dinner. While at the

dinner we had the chance to watch five agriculture educators be inducted into the Hall of Fame. We also met with members from the Jackson County FFA Chapter and the Georgia State Officer team. Following the dinner the state officers and our team sat down for an inspiring historical video on the wonderful game of dodge ball. I am certain many of you know what movie I am referencing. It was a lot of fun until I passed out.

Saturday was spent packing and gathering up things, we also had the chance to make a run to the home of the Bulldogs, University of Georgia. There we toured the campus and had dinner with the Georgia State FFA staff. It was a great way to end an amazing





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week. Sunday we headed back to the much colder climate of Indianapolis, Indiana. I want to thank all the people who made this trip such a wonderful and growing experience for my team and I. Everyone from the state staff, to the advisors, to the Alumni, and most importantly the great members of the Georgia FFA Association, thank you. We'll talk to you all soon.