

Forged In Fire

IGNITE

WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION OF FFA

State Convention Stories

JUNE 10TH-14TH, 2024

CULTIVATING LEADERS



State Convention Stories

June 10th - 14th, 2024

2023-24 WISCONSIN FFA STATE OFFICERS



SECTION 1

Brooke Wittrack

SECTION 2

Sophie Koehler

SECTION 3

Jescey Thompson

SECTION 4

Parker Litterick

SECTION 5

Linsey Mueller

SECTION 6

Julia Lenz

SECTION 7

Lizzy Reinart

SECTION 8

Amber Bunnell

SECTION 9

Amy Jentges

SECTION 10

Henry Koerner

STATE PRESIDENT

Mary Schrieber

MEET YOUR PR TEAM

Written By Carlee Rodebaugh



Have you ever wondered how the Wisconsin State FFA Convention is able to release information from the convention so fast? Well, that is due to the hard work of the public relations team. From writing articles to posting on social media and conducting interviews, the public relations team does it all. Under the supervision of many superiors, the team is made up of twenty-four FFA members and is separated by different forms of communication. There is an Exploratory team, a Media Publishing team, a Creative Writing team, a Visual Media team, and an Interview team, each with their own handful of tasks and goals to complete.





According to Katie Cink, a Public Relations Intern, her favorite part of being a member of the public relations team is “getting to meet all the students and being able to be a part of the Wisconsin Association of FFA.”

Putting in hours of hard work and dedication, they are able to keep the followers of the convention up to date and informed on everything that has occurred, which is very important. Although there are many tasks at hand for the team, positivity, excitement, and teamwork fills the newsroom and pushes them to be and do the best they can. The stories and articles written in this magazine were written by members of the public relations team. Thank you to the Public Relations Team for all of your time and effort!

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DAY OF SERVICE

Written By Katie Cink



*Living
to
Serve*

The Wisconsin FFA Day of Service has once again returned to the Madison community and this year in full swing. Due to the pandemic, service activities have been scaled down to ensure the health and safety of students. This is the first year students were back in full force to lend a helping hand to the Madison community. FFA members put into action the “living to serve” line of the FFA motto by participating in community service projects on June 10, the opening day of the Wisconsin FFA Convention. The Wisconsin FFA Convention was held at the Alliant Energy Center June 12 -15.

"The Wisconsin FFA Day of Service kicks off the State FFA Convention by giving members an event that re-centers them on the final line of the FFA motto, 'Living to Serve' before a week of celebration," said Day of Service Manager Amelia Hayden. "In a week of accolades, it is important we also find ways to pay that success forward to others, and the Day of Service does just that."

320 members had the opportunity to pay it forward at eleven different locations in Madison. At multiple city parks members removed invasive species, planted varieties of plants, and helped maintain the establishment. Additionally, at UW-Arboretum, members worked with the site's horticultural team to tend woody plants by pulling weeds and spreading mulch around the trees and shrubs. Members also volunteered at Lussier Community Education Center, Goodman Community Center, Bayview Community Center, and the Ronald McDonald House. At these locations, participants aided with indoor cleaning, garden work, organization, and outdoor pick-up.

Wisconsin FFA members also had the opportunity to participate in on-site projects through collaboration with Sleep in Heavenly Peace. Members helped to assemble 40 beds for children and families in need in the Madison area. The Wisconsin Association of FFA will be collecting twin sheets, pillowcases, and comforter sets to donate as well. Wisconsin FFA Day of Service efforts are made possible thanks to generous donations from Kerry Ingredients and the National FFA Living to Serve Grant Fund.

Since the event's inception in 2009, FFA members have provided 4,000 volunteer hours to the Madison community. The event has not been held in its traditional format since 2019 due to the coronavirus pandemic. In past years, in place of Day of Service, the Wisconsin Association of FFA has held modified service events such as a food and hygiene drive. Day of Service is one of the many events that FFA members can participate in to develop their premier leadership, personal growth, and career success at the 95th Wisconsin FFA Convention.



STATE CONVENTION: A FIRST TIME AND VETERAN PERSPECTIVE

Written By Jordan Lamb

Every year, in June, the halls of the Wisconsin State FFA Convention are filled with blue corduroy jackets and familiar faces. The Wisconsin State FFA Convention provides members, advisors, and many others with learning opportunities, a competitive atmosphere, new experiences, and a sense of community. This year we wanted to get perspective from a first timer and a veteran attendee.

We sat down with members who were first-timers of the Wisconsin FFA convention. For many, the sea of blue and gold is quite a sight. A full convention hall with thousands of members dancing, laughing, and enjoying all the festivities. Elizabeth from the Portage FFA chapter says how much she enjoyed the energy. She also participated in the Agriscience Fair. It was also Cassandra from the Freedom FFA's first time at the convention. When asked about her favorite part so far, she said, "Competing in LDEs and getting to go up onstage as a finalist." Finally, we asked her what was most surprising about the convention, "I was surprised by how many people there were. I wasn't expecting it to be this big. I think it's really awesome."





Lindsey Augustine, 2019-2020 Wisconsin State Vice President from Section 2 and many-time convention attendee, has many stories from her time at the Wisconsin State FFA Convention. Lindsey has come back to convention every year, and this time, to help with LDEs. Her favorite memory from convention was running for state office, “I remember when my name was called, and I ran on stage, and I literally jumped into one of my new teammate’s arms. I was just thinking, ‘Oh my goodness, this is amazing!’ Just knowing that I would be able to serve Wisconsin FFA was awesome.

Augustine encourages members: “Get involved in workshops. There are lots of workshops going on throughout the whole week. There’s so many different opportunities to get involved in workshops and see all those opportunities that agriculture has.”

Whether it's your first time or one of your last times, the state convention is a special place. While we may be different in our experiences, convention unites us all with common interest: Celebrating and advocating for agriculture and the FFA!



FFA FRIENDSHIPS BUILT AT CONVENTION

Written By Layten Sobieski

Friendships and family are important to have while celebrating achievements and participating in different contests, workshops, sessions, and community service activities. Throughout members' time in FFA, they have the opportunity to meet different people, whether that is from a local chapter, the state, or even the nation, or during the 95th Wisconsin State FFA Convention. At this year's convention, members made friendship bracelets to give to one another. This activity facilitated conversation and fellowship among students.



Members from different chapters had the ability to easily start up a conversation just by exchanging a bracelet. This strengthened the bond between members and the family of Wisconsin FFA.

It is valuable to make connections with others; some may last a short time while only at the convention, while others will last a lifetime. During the convention, members have the opportunity to meet others, build relationships, make friends, become closer together, and eventually start to feel like a family. These friendships become people you can lean on throughout your FFA journey.

Having people to count on for support is critical, because we are unable to lead and serve the world without these friendships. Your impact on someone can lead them to impact others and create relationships and support those around them. These relationships also will turn into memories being made that will last a lifetime!



SPEAK WORDS OF LIFE

Written By Carlee Rodebaugh

*Amara
Jackson*



Every year, the Wisconsin State FFA Convention has the opportunity for an influential keynote speaker to relay important lessons or stories to the members. This year, we had the privilege of having the National FFA President, Amara Jackson, fill that position in session one.

Amara was born and raised in Corona, Michigan and is now attending Oklahoma State University for agricultural communications and agribusiness. Putting in a great deal of hard work and dedication, she has had two Supervised Agricultural experiences with equine Science Placement, and Agricultural Sales Placement and continues to make a big impact.

Amara began her speech with a story. A story about a situation she had when she was just nine years old. Having loved the smell of her mother's candle, she couldn't wait for her mom to get home to light it. Taking a match, she decided to light the candle and immediately tossed it in the garbage. Suddenly, the situation turned from good to very bad, with the room filling with the smell of burning plastic instead of the pleasant aroma of the candle.



She recalls feeling all of those negative emotions and thinking all of those negative thoughts and was not sure about what she was going to tell her mom when she got home. When her mom arrived home and questioned her about what happened, originally she tried to hide it all and made up a web of lies, although later, she confessed. She remembers her mom telling her a lesson that has stuck with her since then. A lesson that everyone can learn from. It was simple; speak Words of Life.



Although she wasn't sure what it meant at first, she explains that we all say different things, and they may all have different meanings, but the power of our words means the most, even in the smallest of moments. To speak Words of life, She explains, is to speak words of hope and truth. Every day, we write, think, and speak words. We have the power to lift people up and bring people together, and in some cases, even though we may not intend them to, we have the power to tear people down just by our word choices.

She continues on with another story from her freshman year. Being nervous about beginning a new task, she recalls channeling all of those negative thoughts and emotions just as she had in the last situation. She remembers feeling like everyone was looking at her and judging her for the things she couldn't control. Amara was scared of what other people might think and say about her, but she was reminded of the lesson she had learned before. Words mean the most, even in the smallest of moments. Switching our narrative and filling our vocabulary with words of life such as "I can, I do, I want, and I will" could change the whole outcome of a situation or experience dramatically. Although you can't control the words that others use, she states, you can control your own words, and that's enough to make a difference.

Instead of tearing people down, She concludes, we should choose to use words that build people up. We should reframe the narrative in our minds, and we should always remember that words have power, words give life, you matter, and your words matter.

**"I CAN,
I DO,
I WANT,
AND
I WILL."**



The gift of blue can mean many different things to different people. It could mean getting a jacket sponsored by your local VFW when you are the recipient of Star Greenhand. Though for these 26 FFA members, they received jackets on stage at this year's 95th Wisconsin FFA State convention. Thanks to many donors, Wisconsin FFA has been able to give more than 17,000 jackets to students.

Jordan Lamb, from the Spring Valley FFA Chapter, received this award during the 2021 Wisconsin FFA State Convention. Since then, the Wisconsin FFA association has still been giving away jackets to many members who go through the application process and are selected. The jacket she won that year she wore to her first state convention, the 95th Wisconsin FFA Convention! These jackets make sure that when we attend FFA events, we all have something in common: this amazing organization.

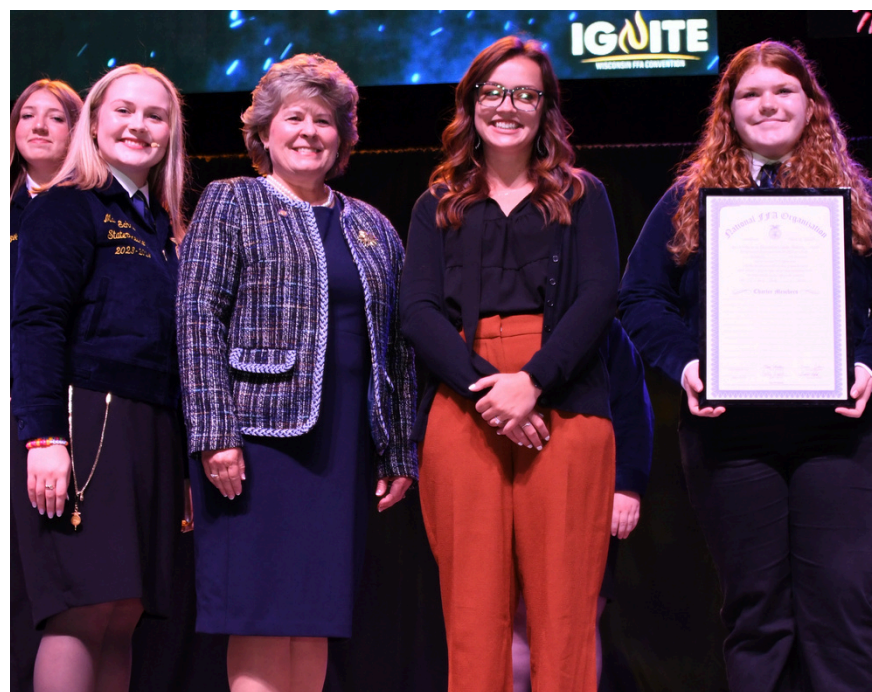
Giving the gift of blue to our members can give them a sense of belonging and professionalism. When you get your name and position embroidered, you can feel a sense of pride while showing off the work you have put into your local chapter and this organization as a whole. Jordan still plans on being involved with the ag industry while going to Kansas State, double majoring in ag communications and animal science. Receiving the gift of blue has pushed members like Jordan to keep asking questions and stay active advocates of the agriculture industry.

Members like Jordan have been made to feel very good about receiving this award. The gift of blue has helped jump-start many careers for the members involved.

THE GIFT OF BLUE

Written By Faith Sopa





CHARTERING NEW CHAPTERS

Written By Izzy Haeft

Having a local chapter is a privilege many members and advisors take for granted. Yet, establishing one is a formidable undertaking. Three new chapters were officially chartered during the 95th Wisconsin State FFA Convention: La Crosse FFA, advised by Brooks Lueck; Destinations Career Academy FFA, advised by Mindy Smits; and Nathan Hale FFA, advised by Katie Agnew.

To be officially recognized, a prospective local chapter must comply with both state and national requirements. Amongst these, an application, the names of all chapter members and officers, and a proposed constitution and bylaws must be submitted to the National FFA Organization.

These conditions were only part of the process. Brianna Howe and Zoey Nelson, members of the La Crosse FFA, noted the challenges they faced. The unknown of their first State Convention had been daunting, but their path had been illuminated by the assistance of other chapters.

Not only did these members get to learn from more experienced FFA members, but they also felt a new connection within their own schools. They uncovered shared interests that may never have been seen otherwise. Howe and Nelson found the support and enthusiasm of the FFA community to be “eye-opening” despite earlier struggles.

While the La Crosse FFA is the first chapter in their area, the Nathan Hale FFA is Milwaukee County’s second FFA chapter. Further, the Destinations Career Academy FFA is the first ever virtual chapter. It now allows online agriculture education students to become FFA members.

The La Crosse, Destinations Career Academy, and Nathan Hale FFA chapters had to overcome difficulties but discovered the unwavering encouragement of the FFA community. With the addition of new chapters, FFA can expand to impact more schools, communities, and lives.



The sound of music ringing, people singing, and lots of dancing is brought with pride and joy in Wisconsin FFA, but what happens behind the scenes?

Every year, FFA members are hand-selected into the band and choir after going through an application process that consists of an audition. These members are then to meet twice a year to perform at the State FFA Convention and the Wisconsin State Fair.

These band and choir members spend the entirety of their time at state convention learning new music and pushing themselves to become better singers and musicians for up to six hours a day. Each song that may be performed in a session at convention or a time at state fair was practiced a minimal amount of time in order to make it through the selected playlist created weeks prior.

The state FFA band and chorus brings together the convention hall with upbeat music and lots of enjoyment for all that hear. Countless memories are created as members and guests dance and laugh together. Thank you to the band and chorus for providing such wonderful music as a soundtrack for the 2024 Wisconsin State Convention.

BAND & CHORUS

Written By Sonya Merritt



SCRAPBOOK CONTEST

Written By Izzy Haefl

Some members of Wisconsin FFA chapters have traded in their official dress in favor of art smocks to compete in the annual Scrapbook contest. To participate, chapters can create either a traditional or digital scrapbook to be displayed and judged at the State Convention in June.



This year, twelve chapters submitted a scrapbook - two were digital. The tried-and-true, traditional scrapbook encourages the use of both 2D and 3D ornaments like stamps, ribbons, and foam dots. Unlike their customary counterparts, the digital scrapbook is reliant on the digital formatting of stickers, captions, and other supplemental material. Both categories encourage the use of thank-you notes, quotes, and newspaper clippings. Among the nine overall judging criteria categories, creativity is what sets each individual scrapbook apart. Regardless of the method, both approaches create an all-inclusive compilation of activities.

The Traditional Scrapbook winning chapter was Cochrane-Fountain City FFA, and the Digital Scrapbook winning chapter was Manawa FFA.

The Scrapbook contest separates itself from other competitions by focusing on the creative aspects of FFA and the artistic abilities of its members. The Wisconsin FFA offers members a unique way to showcase all that their chapter has done within the last year.



AGRICULTURE ARTWORK

Written By Carlee Rodebaugh

The Wisconsin State FFA Convention offers many different opportunities, including the annual art show. Every year, many talented members of the FFA submit some of their extraordinary pieces to be displayed and later viewed and ranked by a selected panel of judges based on levels of craftsmanship, formal qualities, and overall creativity. From very meticulous paintings and drawings to very elaborate and outstanding 3D sculptures, the art show displays a wide variety of different mediums and talents from all over Wisconsin. This year, at the 95th Wisconsin State FFA Convention, we had well over one hundred pieces submitted by our very talented and extraordinary members.



Members who participate in the art show are given free rein on what they are able to create; the only requirement is that it has to represent something involved with agriculture. Year after year, we have seen pieces that include different animals, beautiful scenery, farms, loved ones, the FFA emblem, and so on and so forth, with every piece being individually unique and dramatically different from the rest.

Walking through the art exhibition, you are greeted by bright colors, intricate designs, exotic shapes, and groups of people staring in awe at the magnificent pieces. But you may be thinking, “Why would they want to have their art displayed and judged for everyone to see?” Well, for many, submitting their art allows them to gain confidence in their abilities and show others what they are capable of and passionate about. They are also able to meet others who have the same interests and take inspiration from the other displays. In the same sense, although only a few pieces win first place, every piece gains recognition, which makes it all worth it in the end!



YOU'VE GOT MAIL!

Written By Katie Cink

Each year, the Wisconsin State Officer team paints or commissions an item to be painted. These artworks get auctioned off during the Wisconsin FFA Alumni's Convention in February. Items range from milk cans to tractors or even barn quilts. Each of these artworks represents either agriculture, the state officer, or an FFA supporter. This year, state officers decided to paint mailboxes as a practical yet creative way to showcase their artwork. Each officer brought their own personal touch to their creation.

MARY SCHRIEBER *State President*



As the sun is the token of a new era in agriculture, so is President Schriber's mailbox. Decked out with the FFA motto, colors, and symbols, this mailbox shows FFA pride! As Schriber's time in the jacket comes to a close, she reflected on her choice for the theme of this mailbox: "No matter the stage of our FFA journey we are in, what unites us all is the friendship and brotherhood this organization provides and the progress we all seek to promote."

HENRY KOERNER *State Parliamentarian*

Inspired by one of the FFA's biggest supporters is a Culvers-style mailbox. Painted with the signature blue and white colors and the beginning words of the FFA creed, "I believe in the future of agriculture." According to Koerner, "It symbolizes the core values of both FFA and Culver's, honoring the farmers and agriculturalists who underscore our shared belief in the future of agriculture."



AMY JENTGES

State Secretary



Mooooove over for this exquisite mailbox. This mailbox is inspired by one of the biggest dairy icons: the cow! The artwork honors the dairy industry, Wisconsin's Dairyland, and cows! According to Jentges this mailbox was created, "To highlight my connection and passion for dairy...Eat more cheese. Drink more milk, and make it a DAIRY good day!"

AMBER BUNNELL

State Vice President

The rolling hills of Wisconsin scattered with dairy cows are a common sight in section 8. This mailbox represents all the beauty section 8 has to offer. All 26 chapters of this section are painted on the bottom of the piece. Bunnell explains the idea for the artwork, "This mailbox features what section 8 looks like as you travel across the section that reaches from the towns of Antigo to Oshkosh and from the towns of Wittenberg to Oconto Falls."



LIZZY REINART

State Vice President



A red barn may be a frequent sight across Wisconsin, but nothing quite like this unique mailbox. Unlike regular mailboxes, this one is packed with livestock! This piece includes an assortment of animals, such as pigs, cows, horses, and more. According to Reinart, "Though no longer functional for its original purpose, this mailbox is sure to look great as decoration or be tons of fun for play in your home!"

JULIA LENZ

State Vice President



Want to catch someone's eye? Well, look no further than this mailbox. Covered in cheetah print and sparkles, this artwork stands out in the crowd. Lenz gave insight on why she picked this design: "A trendy pattern that catches the eye with a singular glance, that so many individuals are drawn to...The perfect balance of style, sass, and sophistication brought to life."

LINSEY MUELLER

State Treasurer

Stop and smell the roses because this artwork has it all. Imagine a cold Wisconsin winter but then stepping into a completely different world: a greenhouse! The climate is warm and there are plants and flowers all around this was the vision when creating the mailbox. According to Mueller, "It's the most amazing experience in the world... it takes adventure to a new level, because this greenhouse is in season all year long!"



PARKER LITTERICK

State Vice President



Think about all the wonderful things Wisconsin is known for. You can find all of these specialties in this mailbox! The piece includes many delicacies from the place we call home including dairy cows, corn, cranberries, cheese, and more! According to Litterick, "Growing up on a small dairy farm and being impacted by agriculture in countless ways, this Wisconsinite mailbox certainly hits for me and now hopefully, can mark home for you!"

JESCEY THOMPSON

State Reporter



See ya next time! If you are a Wisconsinite, you might be familiar with this saying. Covered in red and white, along with Kwik Trip symbols, is this fantastic mailbox. Thompson said, “Not only is this mailbox about the legendary Kwik Trip Food, but it also serves as a reminder of the memories made while on the road this year. Let this mailbox remind you of your journey in FFA.”

SOPHIE KOEHLER

State Vice President

Beep! Beep! Coming through! Inspired by the Wisconsin license plate is an homage to midwestern saying and Wisconsin’s Dairyland. Throughout the year state officers have put many miles on their journeys across the state. However, these travels have brought amazing opportunities and adventures to FFA members statewide. Koehler said “We saw quite a few different license plates but for me nothing feels quite like home than reading America’s Dairyland.”



BROOKE WITTROCK

State Sentinel



From turkeys to trout, this piece of artwork has it all. This mailbox was created as an ode to the beautiful scenery and wildlife of the state of Wisconsin. The piece reminds Wittrock of times spent in the great outdoors, fishing and hiking with her father. She says, “Those memories are priceless, and they made me who I am today. Wisconsin is a beautiful place, and we can all be extremely proud to call it our home no matter how we choose to take in the views!”

PROFICIENCY HIGHLIGHT

Written By Camden Russell



Proficiency awards honor students who have taken a special interest in their Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) under the categories of entrepreneurship, placement, agriscience research, and a combination of a few. Students receiving these awards have gained skills they use in their future careers, such as responsibility, organization, and special skills within their proficiency area.

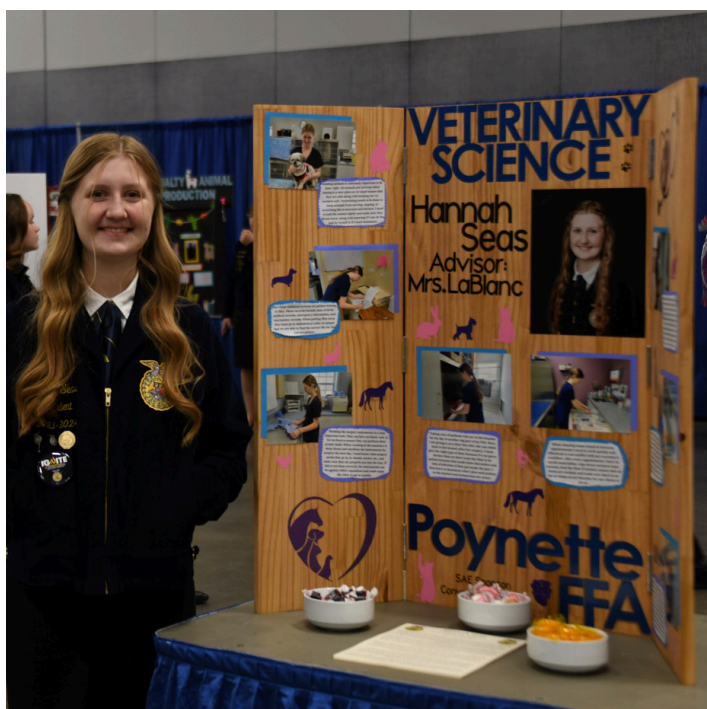
Walking through and looking at proficiency projects in the Alliant Energy Center, it was clear that Wisconsin FFA members are passionate and dedicated to their work in agriculture. The students have accomplished everything from vegetable to dairy production, and it is truly inspiring to admire their work.

SAEs not only help students develop a passion project but also help them establish skills for potential careers. No matter the SAE, students are learning and growing each step of the way. Talk to your advisor today to start your next SAE!



One student who highlights a great SAE is Aubry McCarthy from the Darlington FFA Chapter. When talking with Aubrey, she preached that you should go outside your comfort zone and try something new. Aubrey's original proficiency was cattle production, but then she decided to go outside her comfort zone and switch. Getting started, Aubrey struggled to find the tools, help, and connections she needed to get going. However, she pushed through, and it made her small idea into a blossoming proficiency.

Every day, Aubrey gets up and goes straight to the garden to check the plants. She observes the dryness of the soil and looks at the weather to determine what level to set the sprinklers at. Aubrey then repositions bins as needed, depending on available sunlight. She enjoys donating the extra produce to her local food pantry, which makes her job extremely rewarding. Aubrey has been able to reach out and connect with peers and elders to help build her proficiency, which has been a huge benefit for her. Aubry has gained friends she can talk to when she needs encouragement or to solve an issue. Aubrey's proficiency has helped her make connections to further her education at the University of Wisconsin Platteville.



AGRISCIENCE FAIR: THE SCIENTISTS OF TOMORROW!

Written By Camden Russell



The Agriscience Fair recognizes students studying the application of scientific principles and emerging technologies in agricultural enterprises. Participants must plan and implement a scientific experiment to prove a hypothesis. With the results of this experiment, the participants must summarize their findings in a research paper and put together a display. Let's highlight some of the outstanding projects!



Overall, the agriscience fair teaches members about the scientific method while exploring topics that they are passionate about. Students who placed first at the state convention will move on to the national convention held in the fall. Congratulations to all agriscience fair participants and winners on their hard work and dedication!



Emily Sydow from the Sun Prairie East chapter had a project in the Social Sciences Systems category. Her project was titled The Current State of Farmland Preservation and its effects on agricultural education. A year ago, when Emily attended an agriculture advocacy workshop at the 94th Wisconsin State Convention, she fell in love with agriculture policy. Throughout the year, she met new faces and discussed farmland preservation with people across Wisconsin. Emily was able to travel the state and learn about farmland preservation. She learned that there are currently no resources for consumers to learn about farmland preservation unless they are already in the network. Emily believes that if there were more resources for people to learn, more consumers, farmers, and landowners would participate.

Jianna Scheffer and Sophie Pernsteiner from the Osseo-Fairchild chapter had a project in the Food Products and Processing Systems category. Their project was titled Effectiveness of B-Vitamin Supplemented Tomato Juice as an Alternative Growth Media for *Euglena gracilis*. Jianna and Sophie found that *Euglena gracilis* has many growth and health benefits, but it was expensive, and they wanted to find a cheaper alternative. The girls grew *Euglena gracilis* algae in tomato juice as an inexpensive control growth medium. The girls found that the protein level for the tomato juice jars was the same, and the control protein level was so small that it did not show up. The algae cell count was also taken into consideration. Tomato juice with vitamins B12 and B1 had the highest cell count, and the control variable had visible algae on the sample, but when under a microscope, no algae was present.



LDES: CREATING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

Written By Jordan Lamb



Leadership Development Events allow members to gain public speaking skills, employment skills, and allows students to experience real life situations first-hand. Through various Leadership Development Events(LDEs), students can participate in mock job interviews, public speaking contests, agricultural discussions, and much more. These real life contests benefit members, even if they have not grown up in the agricultural industry or plan on pursuing a career related to agriculture.

Morgan Firlus, a Mauston FFA member and veteran LDE participant encourages all members to “Pick one, try it out, and if it doesn’t work don’t be discouraged. Just try a new one.” Two time Extemporaneous Speaking state qualifier says that participating in LDEs have allowed her to “become more confident in [her] public speaking skills and network with members and industry professionals.” As a recent graduate of Mauston High School, Firlus plans to use skills gained from FFA and LDEs as she attends Kansas State University with a major in Animal Science and Industry and a minor in Leadership, with the end goal of studying animal behavior or agricultural advocacy.



Phoebe Seep, 2023 Parliamentary Procedure State Runner-Up and Marshall FFA member is equally as passionate about agriculture, despite not planning on pursuing a career in the industry. Seep plans to attend the University of North Dakota to obtain a degree in either finance or psychology. She says that participating in LDEs, specifically Parliamentary Procedure, have allowed her to “branch out, become confident, and learn how to work under pressure.” Seep adds that LDEs allow members to “break out of their comfort zone and learn how to work efficiently, yet professionally.”

When asked what advice she would give to members wanting to try a LDE, Seep stated “Do whatever makes you feel comfortable. Find one that interests you, find your love and passion and go from there.” Although Firlus and Seep are just two of many FFA members that participate in LDEs, it is apparent that LDEs equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in the future, no matter the career path that they choose.



ADVOCATING FOR AGRICULTURE: THE IMPORTANCE OF FFA ADVISORS

Written By Carlee Rodebaugh

*Here By
The Owl*



A key piece to not only the Wisconsin State FFA Convention but also every FFA chapter is the work and teachings of our extraordinary FFA advisors. Without their hard work, resilience, dedication, and passion to spread the ideals of both agriculture and what the FFA association stands for, not much of what we have accomplished within and outside of this organization would have been possible. From teaching members much simpler tasks such as how to compose themselves, how to act professionally, or even just how to wear and act in official dress, to teaching them about much bigger topics such as how to find their strengths, how to grow confidence, how to make an impact and produce change and overall become more knowledgeable on Agriculture, advisors make a huge impact on our growing members.

Taking from the FFA Creed, “I believe” that the future of agriculture relies on the hard work and teaching of our future leaders. Having great advisors who are passionate about their jobs and are willing to go the extra mile will make the future of this organization that much better and will only allow it to grow and expand its influence on others.

When asking some of our very own Wisconsin FFA Advisors some questions regarding state convention, the answers we received were very captivating for our passionate members. From deciding to get into teaching because of having such a great advisor themselves, to being able to gain lifelong memories and make a difference in the lives of their members, many of our advisors continue to be the best they can be and strive to make a lasting impact.

When asking Mia Hillebrand, the advisor and agricultural educator of the Baraboo FFA Chapter, why agricultural education is so important, she states, “I believe that agricultural education is so important because it provides opportunities for students to be involved in the agriculture classroom, SAE’s, and being involved in the FFA organization.” She also states that “it's awesome to see everyone in their blue jackets and participating in all the fun activities and meeting new people from all across the state. It's one of [her] favorite parts of being an agriculture educator is seeing them grow and be involved in this organization.”

Thank you to all of our valuable and hard-working advisors who make this all possible.



THE IMPACT OF FFA ON FUTURE CAREERS

Written By Jordan Lamb



Wisconsin FFA helps set members up for a successful future through various conferences, career and trade fairs, and career preparation contests. 2019-2020 Wisconsin FFA State President Collin Weltzien has experienced firsthand the benefits FFA provides for its members. Weltzien works as a dairy farmer in Arcadia, Wisconsin, and says, “FFA helped me prepare for becoming a dairy farmer by taking all kinds of agriculture classes in high school, providing hands-on experiences, getting out of the classroom, as well as touring different farms and industry businesses.” Even though Weltzien is now an alumni, he has continued his passion in various ways, “Although I am no longer a member, now I’m here able to give back by judging, and I get to watch the same young members in their FFA jackets.”

Alli Loosen and Talena Sprecher, experienced FFA members, were able to find their future careers through contests like Leadership Development Events (LDE) and Career Development Events (CDE). Loosen, a sophomore member of the Livestock Judging Team and agriculture student at Lincoln Land Community College, says, “My success that I found in the Livestock Evaluation CDE led to my recruitment to Lincoln Land. Which ultimately fostered a passion for the marketing side of the industry.”

Loosen also mentioned her involvement within multiple LDEs, “I was also involved in various LDEs, two which exceptionally helped me were Extemporaneous Speaking and Prepared Public Speaking, for the confidence of being able to talk on a topic that I may not necessarily be passionate about, but still be confident in delivering a speech in that area.”

Sprecher, a sophomore majoring in Business Administration and a member of the Livestock Judging Team at Illinois Central College, shared that FFA allowed her to find a career outside of what she had grown up with. “FFA played a huge part for me because I grew up specifically with livestock, that’s all we really had growing up and [FFA] allowed me to explore the plant side of things which I found a really great passion for,” shared Sprecher. As young individuals enter their respective careers, both Loosen and Sprecher have noticed that FFA members handle themselves in a professional manner in many real-life situations. “There’s a confidence that definitely exudes from FFA members,” adds Loosen. “Not only are they very genuine, very humble people, but they’re really good at communicating with their words and their body language, as well as being able to just tell their story and have a presence while you’re in a big group or on stage,” mentioned Sprecher.

With the many resources Wisconsin FFA has available for its members, they are able to succeed and use the skills learned through FFA in various professional settings.



WISCONSIN STATE FFA CONVENTION: A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Written By Carlee Rodebaugh

When you think of the Wisconsin State FFA Convention, what do you think of? The mound of blue corduroy jackets from all over Wisconsin lining the halls? The astonishing artwork on display? The ecstatic state officers and staff running around making sure everyone is having a good time and is welcome? How about the incredible band and chorus that consistently delivers flawless performances that get stuck in your head for days on end?

Well, if you answered yes to any of those questions, then you are very similar to many of the members who have had the opportunity to attend the Wisconsin State FFA Convention. Although each of these are essential pieces to what makes this opportunity so special for so many, there are also many unique takeaways that might not get as much attention.

I would like you to take a moment and imagine being a young individual who has never attended the Wisconsin State FFA Convention before. You are meeting up with your advisor to head on your way over to the Alliant Energy Center and have no idea what to expect. Maybe this is your first time ever putting on official dress, and maybe you are nervous about what is to come, but regardless, you try to make the most out of the moment.





After surviving the nerve-racking driving of your FFA advisor, you arrive at the center and find hundreds of members in blue jackets all around you. As you open the doors, you are greeted by a familiar sense of euphoria and belonging. As you walk down the halls, taking in all there is to offer, you have members greeting you, cracking jokes, and breaking the shell that you tried so hard to hide yourself under. Fortunately for you, you are now able to really understand the true meanings and takeaway of this special convention.



From gaining relationships to learning lessons and finding a place of belonging and happiness, the convention offers more than just a simple form of entertainment. It strives to teach as many lessons through the sessions as possible, such as learning about what the blue corduroy jacket means, finding your strengths, enhancing your role within your chapter, finding out how to better your chapter, as well as collecting awards for achievements earned, members take away important understandings and new outlooks on many diverse topics and find others who care and are involved just as they are. But most importantly, members are able to learn that on top of what the Blue Corduroy jacket stands for, it's also a symbol of belonging and home. A home that they can always be connected with and care for no matter where this crazy road of life leads them.



LIVING TO SERVE: A YEAR IN NATIONAL OFFICE

Written By Katie Cink



*Amara Jackson
2023-24 National
FFA President*

Picture this: The Chicago Bulls theme song is blaring in Lucas Oil Stadium, filled with 72,000 members awaiting the announcement of the National FFA Officers. The room is electric, energy about to boil over as the names are announced. Confetti rains down as the newly elected national officers jump for joy, ecstatic as their lives are changed forever. The stadium has erupted in cheers and clapping. For members and the organization, a new era of National FFA has begun. But what does this mean for the national officers? Let's take a look into the fascinating and impactful year in national office.



Meet Amara Jackson, the 2023-2024 National FFA President. Jackson is from Corunna, Michigan, where she was the 2021-2022 state president. This year, at the 95th Wisconsin FFA Convention, we had the honor and pleasure of welcoming her to convection. Jackson's journey with FFA began when her sister brought her along. She felt the organization made her feel a part of something bigger than herself and saw people who believed in her. Jackson then moved on to serve in state office, after which she went through the interview process to be selected to represent Michigan as a national officer candidate.



Jackson then explained the process once you are elected, “Once you are elected right on that day your job starts, we transition right out of college because you are required to take a gap year from college. We spend a couple weeks wrapping up college and basically on December 1st we have two and a half months of training on how to be a National Officer.” During these two months, the officers learn about different traits and characteristics, diving into team dynamics, getting to know your team, speaking skills, and facilitation skills.

After training, FFA week begins, and so does the chaos. This is the first time the national officers hit the road alone. From February to August 1st, they travel all over the country, visiting state conventions, conferences, and camps. Jackson told us she has been anywhere from Alaska to Florida and North Dakota to Texas. The last part of being a national officer is preparation for the national convention in the fall. They are currently working on learning retiring addresses and writing session scripts to celebrate the accomplishments of many FFA members. Jackson’s favorite part of the convention is recognizing all the students' hard work across the year, “It's incredible to watch a student here at a state convention get first in a contest and then compete at the national convention. It's so rewarding that they practiced all summer long, and I am really excited to cheer them on.”

While the national office has its perks it also has some hardships. From city to city and state to state, these officers put many miles on with all of their travels. When asked about the most challenging part of being a national officer, Jackson said, “The most challenging part is the sacrifice of being away from your family. We travel about 1-3 times on an airplane per week. We are gone on the road anywhere from 4-6 weeks at a time. You sacrifice a lot of family time, miss graduations, birthdays, and some holidays. You have to always remind yourself this is a one year opportunity and that sacrifice is well worth the reward because you are seeing students who are grades 7-12 see potential in themselves and it is really rewarding to be a part of that story.”



TRUST THE PROCESS



Like Jackson, national officers give up so much of their time that could be spent with their families or at school. We commend and thank our national officers for all their time and dedication to serving FFA.

Like all officers, their time in the jacket comes to a close. For Jackson, her plans after national office are to continue going to school at Oklahoma State University, where she is studying Agricultural Communications and Agribusiness.

Finally, we asked Jackson for words of wisdom to give to members, “Trust the process. I joined FFA my freshman year and I honestly was pretty reluctant to be a part of it. I didn't really think I had time for it. I was involved in any other extracurricular. But then I became involved and my sister helped me really see that there were people here that cared about me and through my time in the FFA I realized I was a part of something bigger than myself. I trusted that feeling and process and trusted those people around me. I never imagined that as a freshman sitting at Corunna highschool that I would now be traveling the country because of FFA. Trust the process, trust the people around you and enjoy the experience while you can.”

While the life of a national officer can be tricky, it is also filled with joy, compassion, and excitement. Few will experience the journey of a national officer, but the impact of their work is huge.

We thank Jackson for attending our state convention and serving as a national officer. She continues to inspire members across the country just as many national officers do. Thank you for your time and dedication to FFA. We can't wait to see what the future holds for you!

THE IMPACT OF STATE CONVENTION

Written By Faith Sapa



If you ask most FFA members, they will tell you all about their first time attending a state convention. Maybe this experience was early in middle school and made them so excited to work on projects during their high school career. On the other hand, it may be a senior in high school just getting introduced to the agriculture industry and has now decided to become an agricultural educator. Everyone's story is different, and everyone has a different perspective on the impact of state conventions.

Annelise Bethke, a sophomore from the Broadhead FFA chapter, just experienced her first state FFA convention. When talking to Annelise, she stated that she has loved it so far and the “family feeling” that this organization has brought to her. When talking to other members, they agreed with Annelise's statement.





When talking to other members, they agreed with Annelise's statement. Members also say they love this experience because of meeting new people, getting out of their comfort zone, and experiencing things they would not be able to at the local level. Many members experience a similar feeling when attending FFA events, especially the Wisconsin FFA convention.

Annelise also said that the state convention has had a significant impact on her agricultural career. She said that this has brought her closer to agriculture due to everything that was available for her to see and experience. There is so much information about multiple careers at the expo fair, and the Proficiency booths showcase all the many projects students are working on that are specific to their place in the industry.

The last thing I asked Annelise was, "How has state convention helped your interests in agriculture and FFA?" She responded with, "Convention has enhanced my passion to pursue agriculture." The energy that every member gives off during state convention is unmatched by any other feeling. This organization gives everyone an opportunity to comfortably ask questions and get quality answers based on true knowledge and wisdom."

Based on Annelise's experience at the 95th Wisconsin State FFA convention, it is clear to see how impactful state conventions can be. State convention is a great opportunity for any FFA member to expand their horizons on the experiences available through this organization. There are many perspectives on everyone's first state convention. Ask an FFA member about theirs!



2024-25 WISCONSIN FFA STATE OFFICERS



SECTION 1

Emma Johnson

SECTION 2

Amalia Draxler

SECTION 3

Jazmin Wagner

SECTION 4

Tyson Gehrke

SECTION 5

Cheyenne Johnson

SECTION 6

Abel Kooima

SECTION 7

Luke Schnaufnagel

SECTION 8

Taylor Maroszek

SECTION 9

Crystal Anhalt

SECTION 10

Alyssa Schauer

STATE PRESIDENT

Jescey Thompson