



Rushville FFA Chapter

NATIONAL FFA WEEK February 20-27



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FRONT ROW: (L TO R) SEAN HARRINGTON-STATE TREASURER, BRETT ROBERTS-STATE NORTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT, JOSHUA CALHOUN-STATE SENTINEL, MASON GORDON, STATE SOUTHERN REGION VICE PRESIDENT

THANK YOU, RUSH COUNTY

When I put my blue corduroy jacket on for the very first time I was so nervous that I couldn't zip my jacket without assistance. That blistering cold October night, I was a participant in the Rushville FFA Creed Speaking contest. My nerves were getting the best of me. Somehow I was able to calm the butterflies in my stomach. I walked onto stage in the Laughlin Center. That moment shaped the rest of my high school experience. I found my home in the Rushville FFA Chapter.

The last time that I wore my Rushville FFA jacket was a blistering hot day in June. Just like my first experience, my nerves were getting the best of me. I was standing in a circle with 24 state office candidates in Elliot Hall of Music at Purdue University. The door opened, our names were called, and we rushed out onto the stage. That moment shaped the rest of my life. I found six of my best friends that day. I found my home at the Indiana FFA State Officer house.

I've been all over our state since that June day. But throughout my journey, there has not been one time that I am not thankful for the amazing support that I have received from the greatest community in Indiana, Rush County. As I begin my final leg as a State Officer, I would like to thank all of those who have gone out of their way to wish me the best. Our hometown, is truly the greatest support system around. **Thank you, Rush County!**

FUTURE PLANS

Mason plans to attend Lincoln Land Community College to judge livestock for 2 years, then transfer to an undecided university to major in Agricultural Education

MASON'S FFA WEEK SCHEDULE

- Monday:**
Caston FFA - Fulton, IN
- Tuesday:**
Triton FFA - Bourbon, IN
Frontier FFA - Chalmers, IN
North Judson FFA - North Judson, IN
- Wednesday:**
Rensselaer FFA - Rensselaer, IN
Plymouth FFA - Plymouth, IN
- Thursday:**
North Newton FFA - Morocco, IN
Twin Lakes FFA - Monticello, IN
Tri-County FFA - Wolcott, IN
- Friday:**
West Central FFA - Francesville, IN
South Newton FFA - Kentland, IN
- Saturday:**
Tri-County FFA - Wolcott, IN

My journey through FFA

By Katy Newbold



Katy Newbold

When I first heard of the organization I thought to myself, "What is FFA and what does it really mean?" The majority of people who hear the letters FFA stereotype the organization as the "Future Farmers of Agriculture" to me, FFA means so much more. Those three letters have much more meaning that what they are recognized for. You do not have to be farmer, you do not have to live on a farm, and you do not have to want to pursue a career in agriculture. To be in FFA, you simply just have to be you.

My journey through my FFA experience began when I was in middle school during my seventh grade year. Some high school members came and talked to us during lunch about the organization. At that moment, my friends and I began to talk, and a few of us decided to join. Little did I know how much that decision I made in middle school would impact my life as much as it has.

As an incoming freshman, I had never stepped out of my comfort zone in the past. After being a member of the FFA Chapter for a couple months, I was asked by Blaire Orme and Travis Harvey, the chapter's advisors at the time, to compete in a district competition. It was an extemporaneous speaking which is where competitors are assigned a topic at random and are given a certain amount of time to come up with a speech to present in front of the judges. I had never spoken in front of any-

one before and began to feel nervous, but Mr. Harvey helped me every step of the way. I had to constantly be up to date with the current events that were going on across the country, and in some cases around the world.

I had no idea how far along this small competition was going to take me in life, until I began looking back on my journey through FFA. I have given many speeches throughout my high school career in and out of school. I can confidently speak in front of anyone from my FFA chapter to hundreds of people that I don't know. Mr. Blair Orme and Mr. Travis Harvey have had a major impact on my life while being in FFA.

I can confidently say I would not be who I am today without being a part of FFA. It's not just about farmers, or if you live in the country; it's about who you are as a person. FFA opens many doors in your life as long as you are willing to be part of the journey. I have met many new friends all the way from California to Florida. I have had the opportunity to meet potential employers, and travel many different places.

My FFA experience

By Brooke Leisure

FFA: those letters are much more than a club at our local high school. There is so much meaning behind what the FFA stands for and represents. The initial reasons I joined FFA are I wanted to learn more about agriculture, eat cheese (participate in dairy food judging), and meet new people. FFA has given me more than that.

FFA has blown my expectations away. I never thought I could enjoy something so much. It has given me so many opportunities. FFA has brought me out of my comfort zone and made me realize what I was missing. I have made new friends, learned about Ag and myself, and much more. FFA has had a positive impact on me—I have changed for the better.

FFA gives a person amazing opportunities. What an



Brooke Leisure

impact the FFA has made on so many who have participated down through the years! FFA has had an impact on not just the members, but also on the community. FFA is always willing to help the community and the people in it. FFA has inspired me to become more involved in my school and community.

In FFA, I have learned a lot, not just about agriculture, but about myself and others. FFA has shown me how to become a leader. The older members of our Rushville FFA Chapter have set a good example of how to lead and get actively involved. They have had a huge influence on the younger members, including me, even if they didn't know it. I hope one day that I too will be an impact and inspire others like I have been inspired. I want to set a positive example and give back. I highly recommend FFA to others who have not taken the opportunity to get involved in this great organization. I believe that the future of agriculture can and will inspire many others. #FFA proud!

Not the average club

By Kyle Bacon

When I joined FFA, I had the impression that it would be like every other club. You go to the 15-minute meeting once a month and you are done until the next meeting. I joined for the sole purpose that my dad was in FFA when he was in high school. I thought, "Oh I'll join, get a T-shirt, and my dad will be satisfied." The first day in my intro to Ag class was the day that I realized that this was not like every other club.

FFA quickly became the best experience of my life. I didn't think that I would be very involved, but through constant "nagging" by our chapter's



Kyle Bacon

advisor, Mr. Orme, I joined creed speaking, parliamentary procedure, and I even ran for a Greenhand office. Through the CDE's that I was involved in, I began to change as a person. I saw the world around me very differently. I saw the world for what it could be, not what it is already. I now

see potential in everything, even myself.

With FFA in my life, I began to become more confident in myself. I used to be very shy and have no self-confidence, but now I have a stronger voice that I am not afraid to use. FFA has taught me to have many qualities of leadership like honor, respect, integrity, and responsibility.

Overall, FFA is life changing and I have to thank Mr. Orme for all of his dedication, not just to the FFA organization, but also for his dedication to each member individually. I would not have had the experience that I have if Mr. Orme was not as involved as he is. FFA will never just be a club to me.

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FFA

My FFA experience

By Emma Harpring



Emma Harpring

My freshman year I was on cloud nine. I was elected as Greenhand President, won the creed speaking contest at the district level, the novice parliamentary procedure contest at the state level and would be advancing to nationals, and decorated the cafeteria for a very successful Banquet that even the National FFA President attended. It was all very stressful, but I learned how to manage and handle it. I can now collaborate with others, organize events, and know how to run meetings all being skillful tools to have for the future.

FFA. Much of my family on both my dad and mom's side were involved in FFA as well as many cousins and as well as my older sister who was currently serving as the Chapter Reporter so I followed in pursuit. Within a couple months, I had been persuaded by my sister, all my friends and cousins in FFA, and Mr. Orme to run for a Greenhand officer. To my surprise, I earned the position as President.

I never expected some of my life long memories, lessons, and friends would come from our Ag building at school. Where we would have to run in the pouring rain or hid our faces during the cold winter weather. Now even the Ag building door has a special place in my heart. I have had to countlessly bang on it for someone to come and unlock it for me on one of our Friday morning meetings or anticipating that relief from the weather as you reach for the handle.

Even the squeak it makes as it starts to shut, reminds me of anticipating a former graduated FFA member to walk through the door as it frequently happens. It is my happy place that I always look forward to going to at the end of the school day after I have finished all my other classes over at the school.

As an incoming freshman, I had no real desire to join

FFA development paves the way for success

By Macey Orme



Macey Orme

In high school, there are so many opportunities you have to join clubs and organizations through those four years of your life. Many students express this by joining an array of organizations that they are interested in whether that be Key Club, Cheerblock, Winter Distance Running Club, or FFA.

Many students miss out on the opportunity to join FFA because they assume that it's just for those kids that are privileged enough to grow up on a farm. However, this happens to be a common misconception. Over the past three years of my high school journey, I've heard my fair share of criticism about this organization. I've learned that everyone has an opinion whether it's a good one or not, but that's life and you move on. No matter what people believe, to me the

FFA organization is a lot more than plows, cows, and sows. It gives its members opportunities to grow as an individual in ways never thought possible.

My speaking abilities are a prime example of this. When I was a freshman, I would have never dreamed I would be able to do the things I can today such as act, conduct meetings, and even sing in front of people. Back then, the thought of doing any of those things scared the living daylight out of me. I despised the thought of giving a 4-H demonstration at the meetings because it always meant I would have to talk in front of people. Being a high school student, it's expected that you will have presentation projects. With the FFA, it has given me experience that allows me to succeed in these endeavors.

Whatever I do in my future endeavors, agricultural-related or not, what I

have learned from being part of this organization will always be the foundation of this skill set I have developed. The FFA organization is much more than several thousand members running around in blue jackets talking about farming. While I, each club at RCHS has a target goal of what they are accomplishing, the FFA has many goals that are developed for each member and what they want to accomplish throughout their four years in high school.

My FFA story

By Nate Moran



Nate Moran

me with the Career Development Events (CDE's) I have participated in. Not only that, but he has formed me into an exceptional speaker I am today and how to speak in front of people comfortably.

Mr. Orme has also impacted my journey in FFA abundantly. He is always there for everyone and such a great teacher. Mr. Orme has educated me so much about the importance of leadership and what it can do for others. He motivates each and every person to leave a legacy in the chapter. Mr. Orme has given me many opportunities to acquire leadership skills to influence others to get involved.

My story in FFA started when I became a freshman in high school. I always loved farming; in fact, I grew up on a farm!

My cousin, Mason Gordon, became a huge part of the person I am today. Mason had such a passion for the FFA that he went on to be the Indiana FFA southern region vice-president. He always has been my role model and has always inspired me to do certain things that would normally make me feel uncomfortable. He became my coach for the annual FFA Creed Speaking contest. I didn't win; how-

ever, I still felt like a winner just because Mason coached me. The following year, I became a creed speaking coach for the freshmen participating in that event.

The influence Mason has had on me has impacted me a great deal. He has helped

From Brazil to America

By Leticia Macedo



Leticia Macedo

Agriculture System.

My host family has a farm which helps me to understand the United States way of producing food.

Not only does the FFA provide information about agriculture, it provides an influence of leadership. I enjoy witnessing what FFA does for people, as well as me.

I want to say "thank you" to Mr. Orme and Miss Wicker for giving this great opportunity of being involved with FFA. It truly has been a great experience to be a part of.

I'm from the great country of Brazil, and this year I had to opportunity to join agriculture based organization known as the FFA. However, Brazil has a considerably large agriculture industry. Brazil produces beans, soy, and previously cotton in the past.

I became aware of the FFA through my host sister, Hannah. She always talked about how impactful the FFA was, so I thought it would be a

great idea to get involved. I saw more opportunities to learn about the United States

My FFA experience

By Eligh Harrison



Eligh Harrison

me to join. Since I was already enjoying the atmosphere that was provided by the Ag building, I figured that FFA would be a great way to get involved and do a little bit more. My FFA experience has helped me meet new people and also build some stronger relationships with the people I already knew.

My FFA experience began my freshman year. I was interested in the Ag programs offered by RCHS. I quickly developed relationships with the people that were promoting FFA at the Ag building.

The friends I made from my Ag classes influenced

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My journey through the FFA

By Tessa Hoeing

The National FFA Organization began in 1928 and was originally organized in Kansas City. The original name was Future Farmers of America, but the name was eventually changed to the National FFA Organization in 1988 to reflect its evolution in other diverse agricultural fields including marketing, processing, communications, horticulture, agribusiness and more. I had no idea what the FFA truly meant or what it had in store for me personally until my experience through our FFA program in high school.

Coming into high school three years ago, I did not know what to expect. I wanted to be very involved, but wasn't sure what path to take. I had been in our Junior High FFA program,



Tessa Hoeing

and decided I would join in high school as well. After doing some research, I had learned that the FFA membership count is around 540,000 with over 7,000 chapters in all 50 states. Those numbers really surprised me, and made me think that this organization must be something spectacular.

I decided in joining the FFA my freshman year, as

well as joining multiple other clubs making me not as involved in the FFA as I would have liked to be. Little did I know at the time that the FFA had so much in store for me.

Wanting to pursue a career in fashion marketing, I wasn't sure how the FFA could help prepare me for my future. However, I realized that it didn't matter what your future profession is, whether it be a veterinarian, farmer, or even a teacher. Through CDE's that are available in the FFA, you can develop skills in presenting, interviews, public speaking and more. These will help better prepare you for your future in your career as well as life.

My first two years at the high school were a roller-coaster ride! Between juggling academics, sports,

work, and clubs, it seemed as though I would never get a break. It wasn't until the beginning of my junior year that I had realized how much I enjoyed being at our Ag building and in our FFA program here at Rushville. Whether I was there for class, study time, a CDE, or just to hang out with my fellow FFA members, I always found enjoyment and comfort being there for a certain time in my day.

After being at the high school for almost four years now, I have finally found my love and dedication in one specific organization, and I could not be any happier being involved in our FFA program. The FFA has opened so many different doors of interest and concern to me making me grow as a person. Not only has it made a positive effect on my

growth, it has also made me more involved, allowed me to make lifelong friendships, and has taught me many lessons.

Being a member of the FFA means that there is almost always a path that will interest you in some way. Whether you are interested in something along the lines of communications or something like agribusiness, there is ALWAYS something for everyone that the FFA offers. For example, I find interest in communications, so public speaking couldn't have been a better competition for me! Developing communication skills is a key part in the road to success, and that is exactly what the FFA teaches me and makes me grow in that aspect.

"Learning to do, Doing to learn, Earning to live, Living

to serve." This is the FFA motto which all of us members hold true to. We learn, we do, and we live through what we have been taught and what we have learned through experiences in the FFA. The FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students including myself by developing our potential for leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

My time spent in the FFA organization has affected me in so many positive ways. Not only has it made me grow as a person through my experiences, but I have also made lifelong friendships and have learned so many valuable life lessons I will be able to take with me forever. My journey through the FFA has impacted me as a person forever.

The blue and gold jacket

By Laura Smith

Since I was a little girl, I have heard stories from my dad about FFA. He always told me how proud he was to wear his blue and gold jacket and about all the amazing adventures he had while wearing it. So when I became a seventh grader and heard about FFA, my number one thought was, "I have to join!" I was an incredibly shy seventh grader, so I did not get too involved at the start. I attended monthly meetings and blushed a deep scarlet color anytime a high school student said my name or even looked at me as we played team bonding games.

My eighth grade year went differently though. I was more comfortable with the FFA after meeting a few other people in it and thought I might try to do one of those CDE things everyone was talking about. After talking to my dad again, I decided I would try out Crops Judging. He competed in this event when he was in high school and told me what he learned is still relevant to his life today. What I did not realize though was that the judging season had started almost a month prior to my decision and the team was about to compete! I still remember Mr. Orme's shocked face as I told him I wanted to join the team. Thankfully, there was a spot and my teammates taught me most of the material in a week and a half. I competed at Area Competition and actually did fairly well. This success gave me the courage to try out another CDE: Live-stock Judging. This team had also been practicing for some time, but a new



Laura Smith

friend I had made was helping me learn how to judge cattle. I was absolutely terrible at it, but I formed bonds and was making a name for myself in the FFA.

Freshman year came around and I could barely wait until October to receive my blue and gold corduroy jacket at Greenhand Initiation. I wanted to start my own FFA adventures and make my dad prouder than ever. I jumped at my first opportunity: Creed Speaking. Emma Harpring and I were the only freshmen to compete. Our competition night was the same night as Greenhand Initiation. I was so excited and invited my whole family to come see me. Emma ended up getting to move on to District Competition, but I felt like a winner when my family saw me in my jacket after I was initiated. From there, I went on to compete in Freshmen Prepared Public Speaking with a speech about Drought Resistant Corn I had written and went all the way to State Competition. I was also elected as the Greenhand Secretary and competed in Novice Parliamentary Procedure. My team was amazed when we got first at State Competition, and completely blown away when we were invited to

show off at National Competition.

Sophomore year, my younger brother joined middle school FFA and together we competed on the Soils Judging team. He was by far the better soil judge. I also competed in Senior Parliamentary Procedure and was beyond impressed by the debating skills of the upperclassmen. Junior year, I worked after school almost every day so I could not be in any CDEs, but I still helped out wherever I could and even attended some CDE practices when I could just to keep learning about the agricultural world around me. Senior year I was able to join the Senior Parliamentary Procedure team again.

Every year since eighth grade, I worked behind the scene of FFA events. For every Greenhand Initiation and Banquet, I ran lights and sound in the Laughlin Center for the Performing Arts tech booth with Elizabeth Field. I also designed, drew, painted, and hung up countless decorations for FFA events. Lastly, I volunteered at Young McDonald's Farm at the Rush County Fair with other FFA members.

FFA has given me many opportunities to grow as a person. I have better artistic, leadership, speaking and debating skills, and more confidence (I no longer blush scarlet most of the time). I manage my time more efficiently and have a deeper understanding of verbal and written communication with others which allows me to work with them more effectively. I know I would not be the person I am today without my dad's stories, my friends, and my blue and gold jacket.

All because of the blue corduroy

By Jama Singleton

When I look back on my freshmen year in high school, the memories that stand out the most to me are competing in the FFA Creed competition at Greenhand Initiation, traveling to Louisville, Kentucky, for National FFA Convention, and spending a week of my summer in Washington, D.C. at WLC, a National Leadership Conference. Every time I zip up my blue corduroy jacket, I am engulfed with so much dignity and respect from others. The memories and friendships I have made along with the lessons learned while in my jacket, are ones that, I will forever hold close to my heart.

I didn't just join FFA because it looked fun and it would give me something to put on a resume. I joined FFA because I had a solid example that proved to me that if you just believe in yourself, anything is possible. The person whom I have looked up to for more than half of my life is the current Indiana FFA Southern Region Vice President, Mason Gordon. Mason had an impact on my life at such a young age that his motivational quotes, endless support, and "no goal is too big" attitude have pushed me to step outside of my comfort zone. This has contributed to my experiences and challenges in FFA.

Through FFA I have learned to memorize just about anything, change into official dress on a moving bus, come up with easy ways to remember breeds of livestock, how to tie a tie, and how to pack a week worth of clothes in one suitcase. Growing up, especially dur-



Jama Singleton

ing my high school years, I have and will have to face many decisions. Some of these decisions will be more important than others. Without a doubt, joining FFA has been the best decision I've made in the past 16 years of my life. It has opened so many doors for me in life that without FFA wouldn't exist. Without being a part of such an impactful organization, I wouldn't be the person I am today. Along with that, I wouldn't have the confidence to stand in front of a class

and give a presentation, I wouldn't take on any challenge with determination, I wouldn't have the pride to stand up for what I believe in, and I wouldn't have half of the leadership skills to take on life.

Mr. Orme, thank you for teaching me that nothing good in life ever came easy and for always having just the right quote to motivate me. Miss Wicker, thank you for always believing in me and going out of your way to help me with anything. To those whose lives have been impacted by the Ag Building and FFA, you are blessed. It is such a heartwarming feeling knowing that no matter where I end up in life, I can always go back home to the Ag building.

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FFA

Long line of photographic memories

The bright futures of FFA members all start with a ceremonial portrait

By Catherine Whittier
Farm Indiana

Each year, FFA members at Rushville Consolidated High School in Rush County proudly don their official jackets to pose for a group portrait, which is then added to a long line of photos on display in the hall of the agriculture building. The annual photo, taken during a formal initiation ceremony, is one of many traditions the chapter maintains. "It's meant to be special," says Blair Orme, who has been teaching agriculture at RCHS for 27 years.

A commitment to FFA promises to be life-changing, and the initiation ceremony celebrates that commitment, explains Orme. "New members get their jackets that day," he says. "They zip them on for the very first time. We want that to be a highlight of their start here in FFA."

After the ceremony, students are then encouraged to "find their niche," says Quinn Wicker, FFA adviser. "We want them to try out different CDEs (career development events) to see what they like and what they don't like."

Through hands-on experiences, RCHS ag students learn leadership principles, focusing on personal development, teamwork and pro-

fessionalism while working toward the completion of several FFA degrees.

Varying Degrees

As part of their strategy to train effective leaders, Rushville's teachers stress the importance of setting and achieving goals, and ask students to focus on their end goals from the beginning. Students are encouraged to work their ways through the FFA degree program, with the hope that they will eventually complete the American FFA Degree, which is awarded to "members who have demonstrated the highest level of commitment to FFA and made significant accomplishments in their supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs)," according to the National FFA website.

"The degree process is very much like a pyramid," explains Orme. FFA members can earn several degrees, including Greenhand, Chapter and Hoosier degrees, before receiving the highly distinguished American FFA Degree. "This year, we had four students get their American degree," Orme says. "It holds a tremendous amount of value for someone to receive that degree. ... The American Degree is the final destination for those who hold the organization close."

As Orme and Wicker coach their students through the process, they teach leadership principles,

oftentimes by example. "We try to model it (leadership) as instructors, but we also try to develop that in our students, not only through experiences, but by actually studying what leadership is and how that can be applied to their lives after high school," Orme says. "Leadership never goes out of style."

Orme teaches his students that "all leaders are readers," says Mason Gordon, an RCHS graduate who is now serving as the Indiana FFA state southern region vice president. "He always wanted us to read books on leadership, but he was always reading them right along with us. He ... taught us to pay attention to different leadership styles, so that we would grow in leadership potential."

Conference Notes

Rushville FFA members have the opportunities to attend the State FFA Convention, the National FFA Convention and the Washington Leadership Conference, as well as various camps at the FFA Leadership Center in Trafalgar. All these events allow members to learn and grow as leaders, regardless of their areas of focus within FFA. Students learn about themselves at these events, Orme says, and that self-exploration, he adds, "is worth a lot." Students are taught how to interview, how to stand in front of a group and how to be a professional — "the kind of things that they don't

really get anywhere else."

While Orme and Wicker do take pride in the students' accomplishments at these events, they both agree that winning competitions is less important than fostering individual growth. "I figure the same components that make a basketball team or a football team great help to make our FFA chapter good or great," Orme says. "You have to have some discipline; you have to have some expectations; you, of course, have to have some practices. At the same time, it's more about molding that individual and helping them understand what success is and allowing them to apply what they have learned."

While winning competitions may not be the motivating force behind all that happens within the Rushville FFA chapter, members do succeed in competition. The Rushville FFA traditionally places in the top four in the state with its supervised agriculture experience projects. Members have also competed at the national level in every career development event category they pursued.

Rushville FFA members won a national award for their annual "Operation Decoration" event, during which members decorated the

school for National FFA Week to promote their chapter.

Students also plan and host an annual banquet that recognizes what they have accomplished throughout the year. "My favorite thing is the banquet we have every year," says Emma Harpring, Rushville senior and FFA vice president. "We take the ceremony so seriously, and we prepare for three months. It definitely pays off."

A Historical Perspective

A large black-and-white photo from 1940 hangs on the wall in Orme's classroom. "1940 was the charter year," he explains. "One thing we tried to look at really closely a couple of years ago was the actual history of the chapter and some of the people that helped to develop it into what it is today. It was an interesting journey to see who some of the key players were. ... As they say: How do you know where you are going, if you don't know where you have been?"

Tradition plays a big role in the direction students take when they join FFA. "I do believe that if your chapter has a given tradition in an area, that kids tend to want to hold that tradition in

place, and they want to be successful in it," Orme says. "We have a lot of kids in this program whose fathers passed through it, and we're getting to the point where some mothers passed through it, too."

Jenna Geise, freshman and Greenhand FFA member, won the Rushville chapter's annual creed speaking competition. "The one reason I wanted to be in creed speaking is because my dad did creed speaking in FFA and he won," she says. "He also won district and got to go on to state. I wanted to carry on that for our generation and be able to tell my kids about it."

"I believe that students can really refine themselves through FFA — especially through the Rushville FFA," Wicker says. "When they come through here, I feel like they've matured. They can go out there and be great representatives of Rush County, of agriculture and of other things in their futures."

"The true laurels of this organization begin to emerge after you have quit wearing the jacket on your body and start wearing the memories on your heart," Orme says, "and when you have a chance to look back on your accomplishments in this fine organization."

FFA STRONG



Frank Denzler | Rushville Republican

RCHS FFA members Kaelyn Herbert and Morgan Meyer are pictured with Kyle the Lion outside the RCHS Ag Building.

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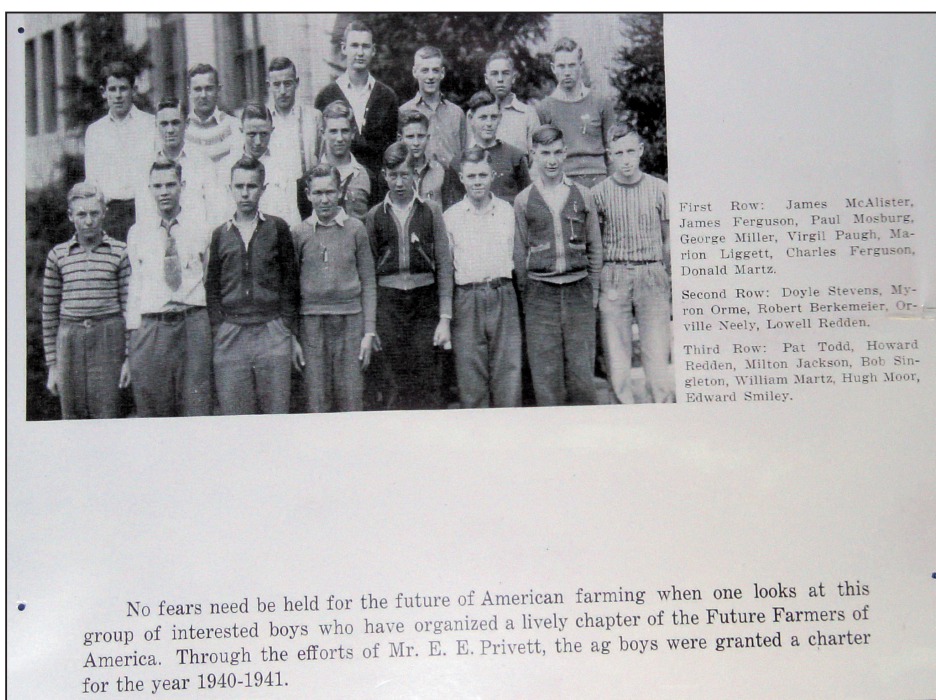
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 Second Row: Doyle Stevens, Myron Orme, Robert Berkemeier, Orville Neely, Lowell Redden.
 Third Row: Pat Todd, Howard Redden, Milton Jackson, Bob Singleton, William Martz, Hugh Moor, Edward Smiley.

No fears need be held for the future of American farming when one looks at this group of interested boys who have organized a lively chapter of the Future Farmers of America. Through the efforts of Mr. E. E. Privett, the ag boys were granted a charter for the year 1940-1941.

Extension publications available for vegetable farmers

WEST LAFAYETTE - Three Purdue Extension publications will help vegetable farmers get the most out of their crops this growing season.

Midwest Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers 2016, Midwest Vegetable Trial Report for 2015 and a new Extension bulletin, Vegetable Diseases: Tomato Disease Management in Greenhouses, are available through Purdue Extension's The Education Store.

The Midwest Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers is a collaboration of land-grant universities from seven states, said Dan Egel, clinical engagement associate professor of botany and plant pathology at Purdue University.

"It provides vegetable

production information that is valid in the participating states for the current year," he said. "This includes fertility, variety, cultural and pest management."

Midwest Vegetable Trial Report for 2015 includes variety reports on vegetables and fruits including bok choy, sweet corn, watermelon, cantaloupe, specialty sweet peppers, hot peppers, pumpkins, winter squash, picking cucumbers and saladette tomatoes.

"One of the most useful aspects of the report is its long history," said Liz Maynard, clinical engagement assistant professor of horticulture at Purdue. "Growing conditions differ year to year, so looking at results from several years can help farmers choose the best

varieties." Vegetable Diseases: Tomato Disease Management in Greenhouses examines common tomato diseases found in greenhouse-grown tomatoes and provides management recommendations.

The publications are online at www.edustore.purdue.edu. The Midwest Vegetable Production Guide for Commercial Growers 2016 is \$10 for a print copy or free as a pdf, and can be found by searching for it by its production code, ID-56. Vegetable Diseases: Tomato Disease Management in Greenhouses is free; its production code is BP-197. Midwest Vegetable Trial Report for 2015 also is free as a pdf or \$42 for a print version; its production code is 16-18-15.

Maple syrup producers question foods labeled maple

RICHMOND, Vt. (AP) — In the maple-rich areas of New England and the upper Midwest, producers don't approve of fakers.

Last week, industry groups from Vermont to Michigan sent a letter to the Food and Drug Administration protesting food labeled as maple that they say doesn't contain the real thing.

They say products such as Quaker Oats Maple & Brown Sugar Instant Oatmeal and Hood maple walnut ice cream are misbranded in violation of FDA regulations because maple syrup is not listed on their labels. Quaker Oats said it did not have a comment, and a Hood spokeswoman said she was seeking more information but could not confirm if the ice cream's flavor was derived from real maple syrup.

Roger Brown, chairman of the Maple Industry Committee of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association, said maple syrup — derived from heating sap from maple trees — is a premium product and sweetener and for that reason a number of companies imply that a product contains maple without the ingredient being present. He said the association has asked the FDA to investigate so that consumers get what they're looking for, and maple producers get compensated for their hard work.

"My main beef is put syrup in it if you're going to call it syrup," said Brown, an owner of Slopeside Syrup. "My secondary beef is if you're going to call it a maple thing, put enough maple in it that it's a maple product and that it's not a corn syrup product that has some minuscule amount of syrup in it."

U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy said there's no comparison between real and artificially flavored syrup.

The letter from maple syrup producer groups in Connecticut, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota,



The Associated Press

Maple sugar producer Burr Morse, left, is joined by U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., center, and Roger Brown, of Slopeside Syrup, right as they talk about a request by maple producers that the Food and Drug Administration crack down on food producers who use "maple" in their labeling when there isn't any syrup in their products, during an event Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2016, in Richmond, Vt. In a letter to the FDA, Vermont producers were joined by maple associations from Maine to Wisconsin who want the FDA to take enforcement action to either remove the maple branding from the products or have the companies add maple syrup to them.

New York, Vermont and Wisconsin, as well as the International Maple Syrup Institute and the North American Maple Syrup Council, said the misbranding deceives consumers and hurts those producing real maple syrup.

"This unchecked misbranding has an adverse impact on manufacturers of products containing real maple syrup, as it allows cheaper products not containing premium ingredients to compete with those actually containing maple syrup," the letter said. "Further, it deceives consumers into believing they are purchasing a premium product when, in fact, they have a product of substantially lower quality."

They gave nine examples of products that they say are mislabeled and say there are many others.

The FDA said it is reviewing the letter and will respond directly to the petitioners.

Producers are fiercely protective of maple syrup,

which in Vermont goes for an average retail price of about \$49 a gallon.

In 2010, they raised concerns about Log Cabin All Natural Syrup, an imitation maple syrup being sold in the same beige plastic jugs used by many producers in Vermont — the country's largest producer of maple syrup.

U.S. Rep. Peter Welch of Vermont and the state's agricultural secretary asked the FDA to investigate whether the brand violated federal guidelines by marketing itself as a "natural" product, noting that it contained a caramel color, xanthan gum — a natural thickener — and 4 percent maple.

In response, the makers of the product, Pinnacle Foods, agreed to take the caramel coloring out of the product, although it said its product was in full compliance with FDA regulations. That wasn't enough for Vermont officials who said the jug and the "all-natural" labeling were deceiving.

My FFA story

By Sarah Harpring

I began my FFA career in middle school. Although I spent nearly the first three years of FFA just getting my feet wet. I had little interest in the actual organization, but I was attracted to it because so many of the kids I looked up to in elementary school had been a part of FFA and all of my friends had siblings in it so they too were planning to get involved in high school. My earliest FFA memory dates back to second grade, where someone came and gave us a presentation and giant coloring books that had pictures of people in these funny looking jackets. Later, my memories of FFA became a bit more comprehensive as I realized that people really wore those blue and yellow jackets and those people sold fruit. That was the extent of what I knew about FFA. My ever-changing knowledge of FFA evolved in middle school, where I realized that the organization did something with agriculture, had dances, gathered at the ag building, in addition to selling fruit...and wearing those jackets.

In high school, I continued pursuing involvement in the organization because my best friends were definitely joining, a proposal or, more accurately, a demand that their siblings who had or still were in FFA members, my advisors and the entire organization paralleled that of my friends. Whatever they did, trunk or treat, involvement in FFA week activities, national convention, CDEs, I did. I don't pretend as if I did not enjoy that first year. In truth, it was a lot of fun! I have wonderful memories of first going to national convention, swimming in a sea of blue corduroy, spending evenings at the Ag building, competing in crops, and decorating the school for FFA week. I enjoyed

freshman year greatly, but even so, I did not yet feel that strong, almost familial tie with the organization that so many others tried to tell me about.

FFA is not an organization where members must conform to one singular experience. In fact, FFA is an organization that really is not meaningful until its members experience it uniquely. Sophomore year of high school was the year that I made FFA mine. Being elected to a chapter office forced me out of comfort zone because my duties were MINE—I was entirely and solely responsible for a small part of the functioning of the chapter. I could no longer choose to participate or not in activities on the basis of what my friends did. As disconcerting and stressful it was at times, it was a pivotal point in my FFA life. This small splash of independence that was caused by my decision to fully dive into FFA by playing a unique role in the chapter rippled into other areas of my life, but this was hardly a sudden and instantaneous change. In retrospect, I can see the shift in my confidence and independence in the chapter, even when I did not entirely feel different at the time. Looking back, I can see the trend: I decided to take classes that not all of my friends were taking, I continued in competitions even after some of my friends quit competing, I formed my own relationship with the members and advisors, not just mooching off those of my friends. As high school continued, I increasingly made my experience in FFA unique. From heading up different committees to doing district contests alone, I felt more connected to the organization by disconnecting myself to a subpart of it and embracing it by the whole. This became quite ironic senior year as I'd actually disagree with my friends about how we should do

certain things, but it is this diversity and collection of minds and ideas that makes this organization strong.

FFA would not be FFA if every member who ever joined was involved only to the extent that his or her friends were. The beauty of being involved in this organization is that at the end, each member has an exclusive experience, but even despite this, despite the differences in background, interests, awards won, competitions competed SAEs undertaken, every single member is united by his or her involvement in FFA. Part of the courage I had to attend a college without my friends, came from the single experience I had in FFA. I learned that being the same doesn't matter, being exactly like someone or some ones doesn't bring us fulfillment. It can bring an essence of happiness, but true joy comes from embracing our single and unique human experience and making the most out of it. That's not to say that each of us should abandon our family and friends and that will somehow cause us to "find ourselves." No, but we each should ream our own dreams, set our own goals, and live our own lives, calming each other when things don't go as planned. To an extent, the idea I had of FFA, way back in second grade was not so far from the truth after all. For we are all very different, and in a way and one coloring page is absolutely insufficient in depicting what FFA is all about. We'd each need to create our own coloring book to depict what FFA is about, for FFA only has meaning because of its members. It is not a separate entity that can stand alone without them. But those funny jackets that I saw in each picture, those would be seen in each coloring book we would create. Those bring us together. Those connect us. Those unite us.

ORIGINAL LOCAL FFA CHARTER



Frank Denzler | Rushville Republican

Current RCHS FFA Chaplin Morgan Knecht and FFA Advisor Gracey Knecht are pictured holding the original local FFA Chapter Charter.

Purdue Extension program to tackle soybean irrigation issues

WEST LAFAYETTE — Soybean producers interested in hearing expert advice on soybean irrigation are invited to attend a Feb. 29 program co-sponsored by Purdue Extension.

Irrigation in soybean systems has not consistently increased yields. Yields from nonirrigated soybeans have equaled or exceeded irrigated yields in some situations. Because of this, the Indiana Soybean Alliance, the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee, Michigan State University Extension and Purdue Extension are presenting an educational program to address issues related to irrigated soybean production.

"This workshop will provide soybean growers with information from Extension specialists and other growers to help in planning for 2016," said Steve Engleking, a Purdue Extension educator in LaGrange County and a co-organizer of the program.

The event will be from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Blue Gate Restaurant, 195 N. Van Buren St., Shipshewana.

Presenters from Purdue and Michigan State University will cover soybean planting rates, 2015 irrigation scheduling research, cutting costs while optimizing soybean yield and quality, soybean cyst nematode

management, soybean disease research and disease management recommendations for 2016.

Indiana producers can earn Pesticide Applicator Records Program credits for attending by paying an additional \$10, and Michigan producers can earn pesticide recertification credits.

Registration is \$10 per person and can be completed online at <http://events.anr.msu.edu/event.cfm?folder=2016soybeanshipshewana> and may also be completed by telephone at 517-353-3175. Registration is requested before Feb. 24 to ensure an accurate count for lunch and materials.