



VATAT

News

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Points to Ponder

Charles Prause, Bosqueville

It is spring time, but we have not seen much spring weather. I don't know about all of you across the state, but in Central Texas we need some much needed rain. I want to wish everyone the best of luck at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo throughout the month of March as well as safe travels while on the road.

The first week of March we wrapped up the Republican and Democratic Primaries. I guess you could say we won some and we lost some. It was very disappointing to see our good friend Todd Staples lose a hard fought Lieutenant Governor's race. I would like to say how much I appreciate Commissioner Staples and the support he has given to Texas Team Ag Ed throughout his political career. I am confident that we will continue to garner his support and wish him the best of luck in his future political endeavors. The VATAT did endorse several candidates during the primaries with several of those making it into the runoffs. We have to continue to support those statewide candidates as well those in your local areas, districts, etc.

After the primary elections were over and final results were being flashed upon the TV screen I began to start thinking about voter turnout. Who took the time to vote today? Who took the time to go out to have their voice heard? After visiting with Mr. McClure and visiting with fellow faculty members at school, I was blown away by the attitude that most people have about voting in the primaries or any other election for that matter. Most

tell me they did not have time to vote due to other commitments, they were not a registered voter, or they felt their vote had no meaning. During my small amount of research on voter turnout, I was amazed at the small percentage of voter turnout in counties such as Harris, Lubbock, Dallas and Bexar. I checked Bosque County and found that we had a 22% voter turnout. That is not a record breaker by any stretch of the imagination. According to stats from the Texas Education Agency there are 637,000 potential voters who are public school educators. If every educator voted in support of education, public school employees could change the outcome of any statewide election. We are in a perfect position to make a difference for our students as well as ourselves in our teaching profession. We must focus on the issues at hand and not party affiliation. We must take some valuable time to research the candidates. What are their issues? What are their beliefs? Will they listen, support you and are they willing to fight for what you believe. We just need to get out there, do our homework and make our voice heard.

So, I challenge each and every one of you to get out and vote in the May runoff elections. I challenge you to research the candidates and make the decision to support those candidates that you think will support our profession. If you are not a register voter, get registered. It is an easy process, take the time.

On another note, the VATAT Professional Development Conference



planning is underway. According to Mr. McClure, final preparations are being made for workshops and workshop presenters, meeting locations are being secured, guest speaker and family night details are being finalized and all conference information can be found on the VATAT website by the first of April. Also be looking for information about Spouse Activities, Golf Tournament, VATAT Fun Run, Archery Shoot and other VATAT scholarship benefits that may be taking place during the conference.

Be safe, stay safe, stay healthy, and good luck with stock shows and CDE's. See You Down the Road!

TEXAS AG ED FAMILY UPDATES

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Wildlife Conservation Camp

Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society

The Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society invites high school students to attend the best week of their summer! The 21st annual Wildlife Conservation Camp will be held July 20-26, 2014 at the Welder Wildlife Foundation near Sinton, Texas. The registration deadline is May 1, 2014.

During camp students will enjoy the experience interacting with wildlife and natural resource professionals and college students from across the state. This hands on camp allows students to study a variety of conservation related fields including wildlife and plant identification, habitat and species diversity, hunting as a management tool, conservation ethics, wildlife capture and census techniques, wildlife tracking, predator-prey dynamics, wildlife management, fishing, hunter safety, shooting skills and much more.

This year's Camp is pleased to be hosted by the Welder Wildlife Foundation. The Welder Refuge is a 7,800 acre privately owned and operated wildlife refuge and research facility with on-site lodging and dining facilities.

The cost of this camp is \$300 per student. Please check with your local Farm Bureau for a possible sponsorship. Visit www.wildlifecamp.tx.org for information about the Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society and the Wildlife Conservation Camp.

Have You Ever Read Your District's Ethics Policy?

Barney McClure, VATAT Executive Director

In the past I have discussed the importance of following your district's written policies, procedures and regulations. One important component of these guidelines is the employee ethics and conflict of interest policy.

As an agricultural educator it is easy to overlook this policy. In some circumstances something as common as choosing fundraising companies could easily be considered a violation. You must remember the most innocent of circumstances can foster misconceptions. Even something as simple as gathering and distributing show animals to students should be executed very carefully.

For example, a student building a shop project for a teacher or family member should also be thought out very cautiously. Many teachers have found themselves in a situation where they have provided materials to a student who is unable to afford build supplies for a project. Providing this aid is the only way some students have the opportunity to construct a challenging project. However, it is important that the student, parents and your administration understand and approve the activity.

Conflict of interest issues can also arise when dealing with fundraising companies. Many of these groups are sponsors and benefactors of our program, but be very careful when accepting gifts from them. You do not want them to misconstrue the relationship. Some gifts may even trigger a reporting requirement to your district.

Some teachers produce and sell a variety of show animals. If you sell animals to your own students, there is always the possibility of someone seeing this as a conflict of interest. Proceed with caution anytime you enter into any business arrangement with a student.

When you are perceived as benefitting financially from your job as an agricultural educator, other than your salary, you are vulnerable to being questioned. Just remember "I didn't know" may not be a sufficient answer.

Professional Development Conference Registration

Karen Jones, VATAT Membership Coordinator

Registration is now open for the VATAT Professional Development Conference! To register go to VATAT.org. Under Membership click on Membership Online login, once logged in click on Event Registration. Register for this event, check your badge name to make sure it is correct, save and continue to the next step. If you would like to attend one of the Monday workshops put a check in the box next to the workshop you would like to attend and click register, confirm/submit the registration. On the next screen choose your membership type and review all other items you may have registered for then submit registration. You will have the option to print a receipt if you would like at this point, one will be emailed to you also. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Karen Jones Karen@vatat.org or 512-472-3128.

Reminder

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Texas FFA Update

Texas FFA Membership Surges Past 103,000

Tom Maynard, Texas FFA Executive Director

Texas FFA membership inched up another couple thousand with the spring membership submission, landing at 103,842, a 9.34% increase over the membership levels at the same point a year ago. Last year, at the March 10th delegate allocation deadline, Texas FFA recorded a total membership of 94,974.

Area III continues to top all other area associations with a membership of 18,368. If Area III was a state association, it would rank 9th in membership ahead of state associations such as Florida, Illinois, Iowa and Tennessee.

Harris County continues to be home to the greatest number of FFA members with 7,369 members in 62 chapters.

The increase in state convention delegates was +195, with a possible delegation of 2,664, if each of the state's 1040 chapters seated delegates. The impact of the membership increase on the state's share of the national delegates is uncertain since the number of national delegates is fixed at 475.

Area	Chapters	Members	Convention Delegates*
I	91	6,568	184
II	82	4,306	128
III	167	18,368	456
IV	75	6,160	167
V	131	12,141	317
VI	93	10,716	272
VII	107	12,084	302
VIII	103	11,888	291
IX	88	9,930	253
X	103	11,681	294

Rank	County	Members
1	Harris (Area III)	7,369
2	Hidalgo (Area X)	2,904
3	Bexar (Area VII)	2,246
4	Montgomery (Area III)	2,004
5	McLennan (Area VIII)	1,887
6	Williamson (Area VII)	1,873
7	Bell (Area VIII)	1,834
8	Collin (Area V)	1,796
9	Travis (Area VII)	1,704
10	Lubbock (Area I)	1,690

San Antonio-James Madison takes the title as the state's largest chapter with a membership of 781. Last year, James Madison ranked seventh nationally with a total membership of 708. Hanford, California had the nation's largest FFA chapter in 12-13 with a membership of 1,054. Eight of last year's top ten FFA chapters in the nation were from California. Nationally, membership counts don't become official until after May 15, so current-year data is not available.

Rank	Chapter	Members
1	James Madison (Area VIII)	781
2	Midlothian (Area VIII)	701
3	Marshall (Area VI)	689
4	Belton (Area VIII)	613
5	Katy (Area III)	607
6	Frenship (Area I)	601
7	Waco-Midway (Area VIII)	590
8	Tuloso-Midway (Area X)	584
9	Sharyland (Area X)	553
10	Los Fresnos (Area X)	546

Local chapters can still submit late membership with late fees. Affiliate chapters may submit members at no charge anytime, but these submissions do not count toward delegate allocation after March 10.

2014 Day at the Capitol

For a day the Texas State Capitol became a classroom as 415 Texas FFA members and agricultural educators visited Austin on Feb. 25.

Students were given the opportunity to learn about Texas' legislation process, especially as it relates to agriculture, at the annual Agricultural Education and Texas FFA Day at the Capitol.

The event, now in its fifth year, provides a unique opportunity for high school students to learn from various players in the state's legislative process.

Members enjoyed keynote speeches from State Board of Education Chairman, Barbara Cargill, House Agriculture and Livestock Committee Chairman, Honorable Tracy O. King and District 52 Representative, Honorable Larry Gonzalez. Students also participated in workshops facilitated by Chelsey Thomas of the Texas Association of Realtors, Zach Brady of Brady & Hamilton LLP, Bryan Daniel from the Texas Department of Agriculture and Bryan Berbert who serves as general counsel for the Lt. Governor's Office. The primary focuses of the workshops were on the roles of legislators, executive offices and lobbyists, as well as expressed the need for bright, young people in public service.



Texas FFA Foundation Update

What Can a Dollar Do?

Aaron Alejandro, Texas FFA Foundation Executive Director

I recently read a story about a man named John Bechtel. John Bechtel and his colleagues wanted to start a camp for kids in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is known to have as many as 5,000 people live in a single high-rise on one acre of ground. The purpose of this camp was to provide an opportunity for kids to explore nature and see the wonders of God. They found there was a company that had built a facility for one million dollars, and they said they would sell this facility to John Bechtel and his group for \$250,000.

One of John's colleagues said, "I'll try to do some fund-raising on the side." For three months he worked at it, but he got nothing. Nobody wanted to give towards this project. He received one letter from a little girl in Georgia named Melinda Holmes. She wrote: Please find my ice cream money for two weeks enclosed. Please use it to help buy a camp for young people in Hong Kong. That was it – there in the envelope was \$1. At the end of three months, the friend shares with John that all we have is the dollar. John says, "OK, I'll give it a try."

Imagine this - he walks into the company and reports we didn't quite come up with \$250,000. How much do you have? I've got a dollar. They sent the offer back to the Board where the answer was: Well, if the camp's going to be used to help young kids, we'll sell it to you for a dollar. That dollar is now framed and displayed at the camp as a reminder of what God can do when somebody has faith, belief in a cause, and is willing to step up. As of today, over 1,000,000 kids have attended this camp in Hong Kong. Not only have they enjoyed seeing God's wonder, but several have experienced a love they had never felt.

Later in life, John Bechtel happened to be at a church where he was telling this story, and a young woman came up to him afterwards and said, "I was that little girl." It was Melinda Holmes. He asked Melinda, "Would you like to go over to Hong Kong and see what has happened there?" She said, "Yes."

People were leaving the church and headed to the parking lot. John ran outside and quickly asked everyone to come back into the church. He said, "We're going to take a second offering." So they took a second offering and raised enough money to fly her over to see the camp

her dollar bought. Melinda walked through the camp and tears flowed.

The Texas FFA, and Texas Team Ag Ed, is blessed with many great sponsors. Generous sponsors who believe and have faith in the next generation who is building positive life skills today. We may never see the extent to which their individual dollar is used – used to inspire a student to set goals; gain confidence; learn responsibility; serve others; or a teacher who was challenged to find innovative methods to connect a learning experience for students; to engage with stakeholders in the local community through skills learned in professional development. Simply put, we have much to be grateful for.

With Spring in the air, stock shows behind us, Career Development Events, summer and conventions coming up, we want to challenge you to consider making an investment in the Texas FFA program – to give a \$1 and see what could can be done for those who may follow in our footsteps because we are good stewards of the organizations we've been given.

The mission of the Texas FFA Foundation is: Strengthen agricultural education and the Texas FFA Program, so each student can develop their potential for personal growth, career success and leadership in a global marketplace. For more information on how to give back to the Texas FFA please visit TexasFFAFoundation.org.

We look forward to seeing you at convention and sharing in the great experience we know as agricultural education and the Texas FFA.

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Texas FFA Alumni Update

Membership Has It's Privileges

Kelly White, Texas FFA Alumni President

Membership has its privileges. This patented trademark phrase of American Express has a strong meaning. For example, try shopping at Sam's Club or Costco without being a member. Try getting reward points from your gas card, hotel stays, favorite restaurant without signing up for membership. Some of you may live in a community with a Home Owner's Association that grants you privileges when you pay your HOA dues. I think you get the picture; some of these privileges are free when you sign up for them while others come at cost.

Why am I including this in the Alumni portion of the VATAT News? Because I would like to let everyone know the benefits you gain from simply being a member of the Texas FFA Alumni.

The mission of the Texas FFA Alumni Association is to secure the promise of FFA and agricultural education by creating an environment where people and communities can develop their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. We provide scholarships to the Washington Leadership Conference (four \$475 scholarships); two college scholarships (\$1000); and ten local affiliate grants (\$500). Membership has its privileges. The hook is you to have an Alumni Affiliate/Chapter to claim these benefits.

Each year I receive applications for these awards from FFA Members and some Chapters in hopes of reaping the benefits that the Texas FFA Alumni has to offer. These qualifications are an active local affiliate in good standing with the State and National FFA Alumni with a minimum of ten (10) paid Alumni members.

However, each year I receive several applications from students that appear to be extremely active in their search of these awards that do not have an alumni affiliate in their local FFA chapter. These applications are signed by a local advisor stating the affixed information is true. Their applications were rejected. This was a difficult task to do. Deny a child a scholarship? Where did they miss the part that you have to have active alumni affiliate with ten paid members? Do they call their booster club an alumni and someone forgets to pay their dues? Am I missing something? Is it fair to offer these awards to non-

members? Is your Star Greenhand awarded to the best first year Ag student or is it awarded to your outstanding first year FFA member? Membership has its privileges.

I had someone recently ask me if the Texas FFA Alumni could sponsor an event. I told this person that I could not make that decision myself, but I doubt our Alumni Board would spend the Texas FFA Alumni's money on a function that would not personally benefit the Texas FFA. Membership has its privileges.

Beware! Some of the Reward Clubs have fine print and a gotcha clauses. The Texas FFA Alumni doesn't. All that we ask is ten national/state dues paying members and complete the application to put your name in the hat for our rewards. More rewards can be found on our website www.texasffaalumni.org

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Texas Young Farmer Update

Notes From the Executive Secretary

Don Beene, Texas Young Farmers Executive Secretary

Hello Texas Young Farmers! Time is flying by, only two months of school remaining. I hope that everyone turned in their scholarship applications before the April 1st deadline.

Throughout my last few articles I have attempted to recognize everyone that contributed to the success of the 2013 National Institute we hosted in San Antonio, Texas last December. I did my best to recognize everyone for their hard work; however I may have left a few names off of the list. There were many of you, whose names I am not aware of, that worked behind the scenes. I would like to take this time to sincerely thank you.

The 2014 National Institute will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, December 10-13. If you plan to attend please mark your calendars and begin making plans. The Kentucky Young Farmers have some really great tours available. They once had a Corvette Museum tour on the line-up, however I do not know if that is still available after the sink hole incident; it would definitely make it more interesting. You also will be provided with the opportunity to tour Churchill Downs. The registration fee will be the same as this past year, \$275. You may go online to NYFEA.org to access the registration form. More details will follow later as we get closer to the registration time in October.

On a positive note we have a couple of new chapters this year, however we are failing at recruiting people who are willing to serve as leaders for your state organization. We are currently in the process of updating the Constitution. We are still divided into ten areas, with odd and even areas alternating as the State President each year. At this time we do not have a person on the

board from Area I, II, IV, VI and X.

We do not have chapters in Area I or II, but we have two chapters in Area IV and Area X and several chapters in Area VI. As a side both of the Area X chapters are operating without an advisor.

We must remember the primary purpose of the Texas Young Farmers is adult education, community service and support of our local FFA chapters and youth. Adult Education is very important; many adults are not educated regarding the topic of agriculture. Please continue to utilize every available avenue to educate your community about agriculture. It can be as simple as posting information on your social media accounts or website.

We have individuals creating laws regarding agriculture and they do not fully understand the consequences. For example, the state of Michigan has outlawed "farrowing crates" for sows, on account they feel it is cruel.

I recently did a little research about the subject on the internet and discovered information that was both negative and positive regarding the crates. We must continue to focus on the positive aspects; such as, the fact that the crates protect the piglets. Positively promoting agriculture will enhance our program, whether that is through adult education or promoting agriculture education.

Next month I would like to see what we can do about developing leaders. It seems no one wants to take a leadership role! Remember something I was told many years ago "if you are not growing, you are dying." We should understand that being in agriculture.



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One is Silver and the Other One is Gold - Bryan Young Farmers

The Bryan Young Farmer's charter was re-instated in 2000, after a five year dormancy. Following the re-installation members met to establish goals and projects to undertake as a renewed group. The first act of business was to make scholarships a high priority on the list of new activities.

In the past the Bryan Young Farmers always sponsored the Commercial Steer Breakfast at the local Brazos County Youth Livestock Show. Throughout the years of dormancy, members continued to sponsor the event as individuals with the help of donations. Member consensus showed this would be a continued activity for years to come. Donations of supplies and food continued, but in less amounts. The chapter's goal was to establish a fundraiser to help pay for the breakfast and fund the scholarships.

Throughout fundraising efforts the Bryan Young Farmers were mentored by two past members with valuable fundraising experience. The organization tried a little bit of everything, working for hire, concession stands, candy sales, spaghetti suppers and even thought about a raffle. It was a slow start, but they were able to start two scholarships for FFA high school seniors at Bryan High School. Throughout every trial and tribulation their mentors stood by them and offered help in every category they could.

Walter Wilcox and Albert Earl Newcomb were solid Gold. Our Memorial scholarships now proudly bear their names respectively.

The Bryan Young Farmers do not have the historical clout in the community like several other groups. They reside in a college community, which on any given weekend, may have numerous groups trying to raise funds.

However, one member suggested contacting Sweet Spirit Concessions, who is known for selling Kettle Corn at local sporting events and Aggie home football games. In addition the Bryan Young Farmers have partnered in activities with Producers Cooperative Association of Bryan; and they came through once again. They are Silver. The Bryan Young Farmers now had a purpose, product, and a location without fees.

They now have a location and full support for our fundraising efforts. The smell of the Kettle corn cooking does its own selling, so they don't hassle customers. Today they try to have a Kettle corn sale to raise funds for activities and scholarships four times a year on a Saturday. The Bryan Young Farmers would not be successful without their Silver and Gold partners and their Solid Gold mentors who have left their mark on us for life.



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TEXAS TEAM AG ED EVENTS

April 2014

1st VATAT Scholarship Applications Due

15th State FFA Chorus Applications Due

15th Foundation Ambassador Applications Due

15th Convention Chronicle Applications Due

23rd - 26th State CDEs

May 2014

2nd State CDEs, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville

3rd State CDEs, Texas A&M University, College Station

12th Texas FFA Scholarship Deadline

12th State CDEs, Welder Wildlife Refuge

June 2014

1st State Public Speaking Entry Deadline

7th - 11th State Leadership Conference

11th - 13th State Degree Check

30th Swine Validation Deadline

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