



VATAT

News

A publication of the Texas Agricultural Education Family ☆ 2012 Volume IV, Issue V

And the Road Goes On

By: Kevin Swor, President

Well here we are and 2012 is just another memory in the bank. I hope each person who reads this article has completed many items on their bucket list. I know I have, but many more were left undone. Now, I have something to look forward to in the year ahead. We also have to look forward to maintaining New Year's resolutions, and I hope you will accomplish all that you have set for yourself.

As I searched for a topic to start the New Year, I felt that this would be fitting to get the year started. Agricultural science teachers spend as much time on the road as long truck haulers, yet they still must perform a 40-hour week job on top of that. At one point in my career, Andrea and I had several trucks transporting materials all over the United States and Canada. We had to manage drivers, equipments and schedules. The drivers had to follow Department of Transportation regulations and log their activities and scheduled rest periods. Do you keep a record of all your scheduled rest periods? I doubt it.

We have just completed the most stressful time of the year for beginning teachers. Did you know that most agricultural science teachers will leave the profession within the first five years of teaching? Most will determine they are leaving at the end of the first semester or shortly after starting the second semester. This is so saddening because they have yet

to see the road ahead and determined their legacy by just a few months within their chosen career.

The VATAT has established a mentor program to help benefit and reassure the beginning teachers within our profession. I will advise each teacher at this point of the year to contact their mentor or vice versa to reassure each other that the road goes on. Each teacher has accomplished much at this point in the year but may have forgotten to reflect on these accomplishments. You have encountered many road blocks, but you are not the first. Roadblocks are not impossible to move. Just call and we will help.

The busiest and most rewarding season is here for most teachers. Many teachers are preparing for the busy show season ahead which will include Fort Worth, San Antonio, Houston and San Angelo. Many more are getting ready for county livestock shows and Career Development Events. Others are looking forward to proficiency and scholarship applications, and the list goes on.

For me it can be very crazy and stressful in the spring and I have discovered organization minimizes the stress. No matter how hard I try, I have yet to master this skill. Before Thanksgiving, Adam Thompson and I listed as many spring activities on the calendar and organized travel schedules for spring livestock shows in order to meet the December 1 major show deadline. It was then that we



discovered I needed to be at the HLSR Barrow Show, HLSR Livestock Judging Contest, move in HLSR Steers and exhibit broilers in Austin on the very same day. Adam said he would like to see me pull that off, and I am still working on juggling those activities. That stressful day ended once the checks were cut and the entries were in the mail.

Another crazy part of our job is organizing student and teacher travel

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NAAE Convention

Atlanta, Georgia

Charles Prause, VATAT Vice President

The VATAT officers and VATAT Executive Director Barney McClure attended the National Association of Agricultural Educators Convention in Atlanta, Georgia on Nov. 27 – Dec. 2, 2012. The convention was held at the Hilton Towers in downtown Atlanta. Officers attending were Texas FFA Board of Directors Chairman David Reiley, Past VATAT President Russell Thomas, VATAT President Kevin Swor and VATAT Vice President Charles Prause.

Throughout the week, the group attended several networking events, the opening and closing sessions of the ACTE convention and many professional development workshops. The workshops provided the attendees with useful information to utilize in the classroom and laboratory. During the opening session of the ACTE convention, we had the opportunity to hear an excellent panel of educators, as well as business and industry leaders, discussed the importance of career and technology programs in public schools. In the closing session, Roland Fryer, a Harvard economist and education activist, presented an outstanding seminar reinforcing the value of career and technology education to public school students. Russell, Kevin and Charles had the opportunity to have lunch with National FFA Advisor Dr. Steve Brown at the NAAE Leadership Luncheon.

Kevin Stacey of Oklahoma was elected President-Elect of the NAAE. He was presently serving as NAAE Region II President. On Wednesday and Friday, we attended NAAE Region II meetings. The NAAE Region II Conference will be held June 16-19, 2013 in Raton, New Mexico.

The VATAT officers would like to encourage the VATAT members to join NAAE. Membership dues are \$60.00 per year. We currently have 78 active members from Texas. There are many benefits to NAAE membership. The NAAE places a major emphasis on advocating for our local programs and our profession on the national level in Washington D.C. There are also many award opportunities for members on the state, regional and national level. Carin Cason of Weimer was the Texas Teacher Turn the Key winner. We are very proud of her accomplishments.

On the fun side, we ate great food, witnessed the Georgia/Alabama football mayhem on Saturday and visited with agricultural teachers from all over the United States.

The NAAE Convention will be held in Las Vegas, Nevada next year Dec. 4-7, 2013.

FLORENCE TEACHER COMPETES IN STATE CONTEST



Florence high school agricultural teacher Joe Barbour was a top three finalist in the Texas Farm Bureau (TFB) Young Farmer and Rancher Discussion Meet and Excellence in Agriculture contests at the 79th TFB Annual Meeting. The results were announced during the meeting's general session Dec. 2 at the Waco Convention Center.

TFB's Discussion Meet encourages problem solving through cooperative discussion among young farmers and ranchers. Four contest finalists discussed how Farm Bureau can help prepare its members, both young and old, for transferring family farms and ranches to the next generation during the final round of competition.

The finalists held a 25-minute conversation on the topic and were scored based on their speaking skills, effective problem solving and cooperative communication with other contestants.

In addition to Barbour, the other finalists in the contest were Dane Elliott of Live Oak County and Elizabeth Wagner of Lavaca County. The three finalists will receive a power tool from Grainger and a pair of Justin boots.

Layne Chapman, a Wilbarger County farmer, won the 2012 Texas Farm Bureau Discussion Meet during the 79th TFB Annual Meeting. The winner was announced during the meeting's general session Dec. 2 at the Waco Convention Center.

Barbour is in his third year at Florence High School. He received his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education from West Texas A&M University and his Master of Science in Agricultural Education from Texas Tech University.

And the Road Goes On Jan. 8, 2013 - Mark the Date

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Barney McClure, VATAT Executive Director

along with lesson planning for the substitute while we are away. The best way is to plan early, which was probably yesterday. Some teachers will book their rooms a year in advance. It is much easier to book two rooms rather than eight at the last minute. When you're late, more time on the road will be required from hotel to contest site. Stress can be minimized by understanding the process in your district for purchase orders, check processing and travel requests. Please don't forget the students who are left at home, because they also deserve your best prepared lessons while you are on the road.

I have discovered seasoned teachers understand the timelines and short cuts to get the task accomplished, but the newer teachers often times bring skills that can organize and simplify the process within departments. The last words agricultural science teachers want to hear are: "Who loaded the feed and blow dryers?" "I thought you had the student meal money?" "The score cards and clipboards were left in the office beside the desk." "They moved the contest site; we sent an email out last week."

Let's help each other during this stressful time of the year. The road does go on! Be safe in your travels, have fun and make memories for years to come.

On this date at 10 a.m., the 83rd Legislature will convene. It will not be the same group that cut public education to the bone two years ago. Four of the 31 Senators will be new, and 44 of the 150 member House of Representatives will be new. The House Public Education Committee will be chaired by a new member, who has yet to be appointed. Senator Dan Patrick will chair the Senate Education Committee.

The State Board of Education only returns seven of the current 15. Their schedule includes blocks of meetings in January, April, July, September and November. Their work affects every school district in Texas.

The school finance court case continues to drag on. Testimony goes back and forth, but I found it interesting that an economics expert testified that low teacher pay in Texas was negatively affecting our school systems. Teacher pay has not kept pace with inflation and around 30 states pay better than Texas. We all knew that. Most experts feel that before this case winds through all the appeals, the session will be over. That means meaningful reform is a remote possibility.

The School Accountability Rating System is being overhauled and if you would like to comment, here is the link: <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2013/proposals.html>. It is supposed to put less emphasis on any one aspect (test scores), and more on the overall quality of the school system.

Thanks to a slowly improving economy in Texas, growing our rainy day fund and increased sales tax revenue, many people are cautiously optimistic that we can regain some of the money lost from education in the last session. There will be many other budget line items competing for the money, but education is still on the front lines.

There are still groups out there billing themselves as having an answer to providing a skilled workforce. There are several of these groups that really have opposing viewpoints.

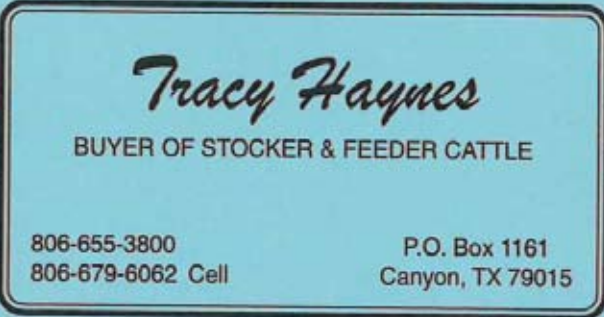
If you haven't done so already, now is the time to reach out to your Senator, Representative and State Board of Education member. As the session progresses, I will provide updates. As bills are filed, I will call on you to contact your elected officials. This can be a productive session if we all work together.



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Texas FFA

Update

2012 State FFA Leadership Development Events: Final Results

Placing	GH Chapter Conducting
1 st	Bellville
2 nd	Anderson-Shiro
3 rd	Anson
4 th	Jourdanton
5 th	Smithson Valley
6 th	Jim Ned
7 th	Harmony
8 th	Bells
9 th	Throckmorton
10 th	Blackwell

Placing	SR Chapter Conducting
1 st	Mission
2 nd	Sandra Day O'Connor
3 rd	Anson
4 th	Bells
5 th	Community
6 th	Bellville
7 th	Harmony
8 th	Boling
9 th	Chisum
10 th	Jourdanton

Placing	GH FFA Skills
1 st	Stamford
2 nd	Jacksboro
3 rd	Sharyland
4 th	S & S Consolidated
5 th	Peaster
6 th	Midlothian
7 th	Sterling City
8 th	Shallowater
9 th	Hondo
10 th	Cinco Ranch

Placing	SR FFA Skills
1 st	Jacksboro
2 nd	S & S Consolidated
3 rd	Sterling City
4 th	Peaster
5 th	Waxahachie
6 th	Boling
7 th	Sabinal
8 th	Henrietta
9 th	El Campo
10 th	Anahuac

Placing	Job Interview
1 st	Madisonville
2 nd	Frenship
3 rd	Belton
4 th	Dalhart
5 th	Seguin
6 th	New Braunfels
7 th	Seminole
8 th	George West
9 th	Dublin
10 th	Orange Grove

Placing	Ag Issues
1 st	Madisonville
2 nd	Canyon
3 rd	James Madison
4 th	Haskell
5 th	Stamford
6 th	Iowa Park
7 th	Lubbock-Cooper
8 th	Troy
9 th	Marion
10 th	Tilden

Placing	Public Relations
1 st	Ira
2 nd	Lubbock-Cooper
3 rd	Weimar
4 th	Floresville
5 th	Madisonville
6 th	Stamford
7 th	Sharyland
8 th	Prairiland
9 th	Quitman
10 th	Nacogdoches

Placing	FFA Radio
1 st	Sharyland
2 nd	Royal
3 rd	Friona
4 th	Hondo
5 th	East Chambers
6 th	El Campo
7 th	Plainview
8 th	Prosper
9 th	Ballinger
10 th	Gilmer

Placing	GH Creed Speaking
1 st	Boling
2 nd	Idalou
3 rd	Tarkington
4 th	East Central
5 th	Angleton
6 th	Smithson Valley
7 th	Ponder
8 th	Grandview
9 th	Hamlin
10 th	Follett

Placing	SR Creed Speaking
1 st	San Augustine
2 nd	Morton Ranch
3 rd	Dublin
4 th	George West
5 th	Perrin
6 th	Cleburne
7 th	El Campo
8 th	Axtell
9 th	Lindale
10 th	James Madison

Placing	GH FFA Quiz
1 st	Waller
2 nd	La Vernia
3 rd	Throckmorton
4 th	Idalou
5 th	Clements
6 th	Ennis
7 th	Anson
8 th	Stephenville
9 th	Bells
10 th	Marble Falls

Placing	SR FFA Quiz
1 st	Weimar
2 nd	Iola
3 rd	Decatur
4 th	Stephenville
5 th	Alba-Golden
6 th	Falls City
7 th	Sandra Day O'Connor
8 th	Jourdanton
9 th	Grapeland
10 th	La Vernia

This year's State FFA Leadership Development Events took place on November 30 - December 1, 2012 at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. The finals results charts were created by Dwayne Pavelock, Associate Professor for the Department of Agricultural and Industrial Sciences at Sam Houston State University.

Congratulations to all teams advancing to Nationals! The National CDE/LDE Competition will be held during October 2013. Good luck, teams!



2013 HALF-PRICE CARNIVAL PACKS

\$10 Carnival Pack

(\$30.50 Value)

One Fun Card with 22 tickets (for rides & games) * 4 refreshment coupons * FREE Game Coupon * \$5 OFF Show Merchandise *

\$50 Carnival Pack

(\$131.50 Value)

Two Fun Cards with a total of 150 tickets (for rides & games) * 9 refreshment coupons * \$5 OFF Show Merchandise * 2 FREE Game Coupons * 3 FREE Ride (One-way Skyride, Ferris Wheel & Funhouse) *

\$20 Discount Food Card

(\$30 Value)

Enjoy \$30 worth of midway refreshments for only \$20! Valid only at RCS midway food and beverage stands. Not valid at food and beverage stands operated by ARAMARK or HLSR commercial exhibitors. Not valid with any other promotions.

Carnival Pack

\$10 Carnival Pack	_____ @ \$10 each = \$ _____
\$50 Carnival Pack	_____ @ \$50 each = \$ _____

Reliant Park Admission *Valid Feb 21-23 & Feb 25 – Mar 17, 2013*

Adult (Ages 13 +)	_____ @ \$10 each = \$ _____
Child (Ages 3 – 12) Under age 3 – Free	_____ @ \$ 5 each = \$ _____

Season Pass *Valid Feb 21-23 & Feb 25 – Mar 17, 2013*

	_____ @ \$25 each = \$ _____
	_____ @ \$20 each = \$ _____

Discount Food Card

Carnival Charity Donation

Just \$15 sends a child in need to HLSR & Carnival	\$ _____
Just \$10 provides for a military serviceman/woman	\$ _____

Handling \$ 4.00

ENCLOSED AMOUNT \$ _____

Half-Price Packs may be used during the WCBBQ (Feb 21-23) or the Show (Feb 25 – Mar 17, 2013). Rides and games require multiple tickets. To enter the carnival during the WCBBQ, you must have a Reliant Park Admission Ticket or a Season Pass. To enter the carnival during the Show, you must have a Reliant Park Admission Ticket, Season Pass or a Rodeo/Concert Ticket for that day. Admission Tickets and Season Passes are not valid for Reliant Stadium or Rodeo Uncorked! events.

TO BUY TICKETS OVER THE WEB:

Buy online with credit card at www.hlsr.com
 Select "Tickets" icon at the top of page; Click "Half Price Carnival Packs"; Click "Buy Now"
 Enter Key Code 1076585 or Select name Jim Soule or direct link
<https://secure.rodeohouston.com/carnivaltickets/?salescode=1076585>

[Type text]

ORDER BY Fri. Feb 22, 2013 (Allow 7-10 business days for processing)

For more information, please contact HLSR volunteer: JIM SOULE 832-287-3528 jpsoule@pdq.net

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



2013 HALF-PRICE CARNIVAL PACKS MAIL ORDER / FAX FORM

Name _____ Phone _____
 Street Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Email Address _____

\$10 Carnival Pack (\$30.50 Value) One Fun Card with 22 tickets (for rides & games)
 * 4 refreshment coupons * FREE Game Coupon * \$5 OFF Show Merchandise * _____ @ \$10 each = \$ _____

\$50 Carnival Pack (\$131.50 Value) Two Fun Cards with a total of 150 tickets (for rides & games)
 * 9 refreshment coupons * \$5 OFF Show Merchandise * 2 FREE Game Coupons
 * 3 FREE Ride (One-way Skyride, Ferris Wheel & Funhouse) * _____ @ \$50 each = \$ _____

Reliant Park Admission *Valid Feb 21-23 & Feb 25 – Mar 17, 2013*
 Adult (Ages 13 +) _____ @ \$10 each = \$ _____
 Child (Ages 3 – 12) Under age 3 – Free _____ @ \$ 5 each = \$ _____

Season Pass *Valid Feb 21-23 & Feb 25 – Mar 17, 2013*
 _____ @ \$25 each = \$ _____

Discount Food Card (\$30 Value) Enjoy \$30 worth of midway refreshments for only \$20! Valid only at
 RCS midway food and beverage stands. Not valid at food and beverage stands operated by ARAMARK or HLSR
 commercial exhibitors. Not valid with any other promotions. _____ @ \$20 each = \$ _____

Carnival Charity Donation
 Just \$15 sends a child in need to HLSR & Carnival \$ _____
 Just \$10 provides for a military serviceman/woman \$ _____

Shipping & Handling Fee \$ _____ 4.00
ENCLOSED AMOUNT \$ _____

CREDIT CARD AUTHORIZATION American Express MasterCard Visa

Name on Card _____

Card # _____ EXP _____

Authorized Signature _____

Mail order form with check or credit card payment to:
 HLSR, PO Box 20070, Houston, TX 77225 Attention: Carnival Ticket Sales Committee
Fax order form with credit card payment to: HLSR Fax # (832) 667-1064

Purchase Tickets Online:
 Buy online with credit card at www.hlsr.com Select "Tickets" icon at the top of page; Click "Half Price Carnival Packs";
 Click "Buy Now" and enter Key Code 1076585 or select name Jim Soule
 or go to the direct link: <https://secure.rodeohouston.com/carnivaltickets/?salescode=1076585>

ORDER BY Friday, February 22, 2013 (Allow 7-10 business days for processing)
 For information contact HLSR volunteer: JIM SOULE 832-287-3528 jpsoule@pdq.net

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



Foundation Update

Inspire, Empower and Legacy

Aaron Alejandro, Texas FFA Foundation Executive Director

How powerful are the words of others? As a young man, I was always told “sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” How much further from the truth could this be? If I looked at my beautiful wife and said, “Honey, I love you!” she would probably smile and give me a hug. If on the other hand, I said “Honey, I love you?” I would probably be sleeping with the cattle. What we say can have an impact. What we say can inspire and empower others while living a legacy. With the beginning of a new year, let’s make it a point to build people up – inspire, empower and live our legacy.

On Nov. 28, 2012, we lost an individual whose words have touched the future. At age 86 legendary motivational speaker Zig Ziglar lost his fight with pneumonia. However, his words have been shared for generations and seem timeless in touching the hearts of others. In 1983, I was given a copy of *See You at the Top*. A mentor suggested I read the book and become acquainted with the concepts of leadership contained. Little did I know that book, along with the Holy Bible, would become such a firm foundation for leadership development. Ziglar’s words, style and delivery made sense. I got it. More importantly, his message was not about me; it was about what I would do for others. “You can have everything in life you want, if you will just help other people get what they want,” Ziglar said. His words were inspiring and empowering. They challenged me to improve myself and also share a message that encouraged others. My vehicle to do this was the Texas FFA.

I set about life and a leadership journey. My voice was my own. My message was checkered with the words of heroes, mentors, family and friends who inspired, challenged and directed me on my life’s pathway. Ziglar’s words were always handy reminding me to do a “check up from the neck up” as to why “I” wanted to do something. Simply, his words challenged me to serve others. So, I began a career in the service sector trying to share with others the words, opportunities and experiences that can make life a great adventure. Why? Because I wanted

everything in life. Ziglar was right! It is in helping others where we find some of the most precious gifts.

As we begin a new year, we have a choice. A choice about the words we will use. A choice about who we will follow, and who we will lead. A choice about the example we will set. A choice about how we will do our job –with or without passion. Simply, we hold in our hands the choice to the legacy we will live. Here’s how Ziglar described this choice:

“Perhaps a parable will help you to see my point. High on a hilltop overlooking the beautiful city of Venice, Italy, there lived an old man who was a genius. Legend had it he could answer any question anyone might ask of him. Two of the local boys figured they could fool the old man, so they caught a small bird and headed for his residence. One of the boys held the little bird in his hands and asked the old man if the bird was dead or alive. Without hesitation the old man said, ‘Son if I say to you that the bird is alive, you will close your hands and crush him to death. If I say the bird is dead, you will open your hands and the bird will fly away. You see, Son, in your hands you hold the power of life and death.’ This I say to you without qualification, and with no mental reservations whatsoever. In your hands you hold the seeds of failure - or the potential for greatness. Your hands are capable but they must be used - and for the right things - to reap the rewards you are capable of attaining.”

Ziglar, thank you for touching the future and teaching us all how to do that also. Do you have that special someone who has inspired you, empowered you, taught you how to live a legacy? It is always timely to make an honor gift and say thank you for helping along the way. The Texas FFA Foundation is about inspiring, empowering and ensuring the legacy of Texas Agricultural Education and FFA. However, our effort is not a solo project. Are you ready to get everything you want in life? If so, let the Texas FFA Foundation help you empower those who will follow in our footsteps.



Texas FFA Alumni

Update

Membership Rosters

Kelley White, Texas FFA Alumni President

Traditionally you would be receiving your local FFA Alumni Affiliate mailed to you from the Texas FFA office with your annual roster. The National FFA Alumni is using an online method of collecting dues, working with an online roster, and communicating with us more effectively. Please do not allow this to delay paying your Alumni dues because the roster deadline is still Jan. 31 in order to be considered for all scholarships and grants.

The below information was distributed by the National FFA Alumni. Remember, the ACN is a work in progress.

What exactly IS the Agricultural Career Network (ACN)?

ACN is basically a website. FFA.org will remain the public website for FFA and anyone wanting to utilize ACN will be required to register and setup login and password information to access the site. The site is also personalized to whatever role you have within the organization. As an FFA Alumni member you'll automatically have a record created in ACN. If we have your email on file, when the system launched Sept. 2011, you should have received an email inviting you to visit the site, create a login and allowed you to update your profile. If we don't have your email attached to your membership record, your state and local FFA Alumni leaders will receive a notification directing you how to access ACN. Once you've accessed the site you'll have information, news, and updates at your fingertips. You can update your information and subscriptions at any time and identify the ways you would like to engage with FFA and FFA Alumni.

Question 2: If a member doesn't have an email, does that mean they can't be an Alumni member when we move to the new online system?

No! We are collecting email addresses on our members so they can take advantage of this opportunity to interact with FFA and FFA Alumni online. If a member doesn't want an email address and isn't interested in interfacing with us through our new online system, they can continue to pay dues to their local membership chair as they've always done. The membership clerk will handle the renewal and payment of those individuals as they manage the affiliate roster. Therefore, it is important for the local and state membership chairs to have email and access to a computer.

Do I have to have email addresses for all my members?

When the new online system launches in September an email will automatically go out to all Alumni membership with email addresses asking them to visit the site, update their profile and see what the site has to offer. If you are unable to collect emails for members, as a local or state FFA Alumni leader, you will receive notification on how to grant these individuals access to the web portal to manage their account.

What if a member wants to interact with FFA/FFA Alumni through the new online system but doesn't have an email?

FFA will be partnering with a free email vendor to provide email addresses to people who currently do not have one, but would like to obtain one if for no other reason to access and interact with FFA/FFA Alumni.

How will the collection of dues be handled?

Answer 5: The Texas FFA Alumni is still contemplating how we will handle the collection of dues. The National FFA has offered us two options for collecting dues. Please check on the Texas FFA Alumni website for more details once the method of collecting dues has been established.

Question 6: How will administrative rights be granted to local and state Alumni leaders?

To ensure the privacy of our members, all member information within the new ACN system will not be available to everyone. Local and state FFA Alumni leaders will need to have the ability to view and edit the information for their affiliate and/or state and therefore will be granted administrative rights within the system for a full view of membership, payments, affiliate history, etc.

We are asking each local and state FFA Alumni affiliate to identify 2-3 key contacts who work with their membership and dues payment to fulfill these administrative tasks. These individuals will need computer and internet access and an email address. To register your local or state FFA alumni leaders to be granted administrative rights for your affiliate or state association visit <https://www.ffa.org/GetInvolved/Alumni/Pages/MembershipRosters.aspx>.

Continue submitting your questions regarding the transition to online FFA Alumni membership to alumni@ffa.org or 317/802-4294.



Texas Young Farmers Update

From the President's Pen

Barry Choate, Texas Young Farmers President



Barry Choate is the 2013 Texas Young Farmers President.

Does anyone watch any reality TV these days? My daughter and I watch Duck Dynasty every Wednesday night just to see what the beards will get into. Think about it - they don't cuss; they usually have a lot of fun, and they promote

family support. The beards say a prayer at the end of each show, and they have a huge following; so, they are doing something right. I hope they have a long, successful run and kill a few ducks along the way.

Our Ag Ed Family is another success story with a long history. From the introduction of agriculture in the high schools through the good old days to the Perot changes, and now a couple of curriculum changes, the Ag Ed Family has persevered. Each part of the family has experienced some rewarding moments, as well as a few challenges. Through good leadership and forethought we have survived several storms. The reason for our success is because we paid attention to the needs of the children we are serving, paid attention to our family members that needed assistance at the time, had a strong family leader and properly said a little prayer at the end of each day. If we stay on course, we too can continue our long successful run.

The Texas State Convention in Sugarland will be entertaining and educational with some great tours. I hope a representative from each chapter can attend not only for the education and fellowship, but to also offer suggestions for growing the Texas Young Farmers. The Young Farmer program holds different meanings to different communities, but it is important to all. Young Farmer programs may be the backbone behind the county fair, local scholarship programs or they may simply serve as a booster club for the local FFA chapter. Whatever the purpose of Young Farmers is in your local community, remember to help educate the community



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about the positive activities taking place with agriculture and the local youth. We get wrapped up in putting on a livestock show or fundraising for a scholarship and forget to explain the big picture for the community members who need to be educated about basic agriculture we all take for granted. We have to blow our own horn and talk about agriculture in our communities, which could be as simple as community gardens or backyard chickens.

Many of you know that I taught agriculture for many years. I come from a family of agricultural teachers, married an agricultural teacher and have a son in college and you guessed it - he is studying to become an agricultural teacher. I don't know many families can say they have five generations of teaching agriculture, but I can tell you that agriculture is extremely important to my family. Let's all help spread the word, offer positive support and help the Texas Team Ag Ed Family grow.

Past President's Remarks

Connie Koopmann, Texas Young Farmers Past President

As I prepared to write my last article, I reflected on the things that have transformed during the past year. I have been honored to serve this organization as President. I knew I had made a commitment that could change my life and this organization. I gave a year and a half of my life to make this organization one of the best. I cannot say I succeeded, but I have a good feeling in my heart. I have been invited to speak at banquets and meetings, and I have had meetings with new chapters.

As I look back, the board has worked extremely hard in making sure the members receive what they want. We moved the location of our 2013 State Convention, trimmed our budget by \$10,000 and worked hard to get sponsors for our awards and contests. We have had our hands full considering we do not have an event coordinator. The board did all of the leg work of meeting with hotels and different tour options to make sure we were getting the most for our money. We are all pleased with our accomplishments. The board has been very open on expressing ideas, and we discussed them in depth. I want to wish the new board the best of luck in the next year. Knowing we will be combining our State Convention with the NYFEA in December of 2013 is exciting. Texas members will be offered a special rate, be able to participate in the NYFEA activities and hear stories from members from across the United States.

One of the most talked about topics this year was the election of our United States President. I cannot recall ever having such a close and interesting race. If you voted, you exercised your right, but that does not mean we always get what we want. As I was reading the Sunday paper, I found an interesting article in the "Parade" insert. By now everyone has heard of Warren Buffett, the billionaire who wants to pay

more taxes. Well, he has a son that fits in our organization. Howard Buffett is a 57-year-old farmer who works 1,400 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat in central Illinois. You might wonder why I think he is different from any of us. Here is the reason - he wants to put hunger in America out of business. Every year his foundation, The Howard Buffett Foundation, gives away tens of millions of dollars to improve living standards in impoverished communities worldwide.

In America, hunger is hidden; people are ashamed of it. Have you ever checked to see how many kids in your town are on the free lunch program at school? You would be amazed to know the percentage is very high. Even though the percentage is high, that free meal they receive is probably the only meal some of the kids will receive on a daily basis. In this country, the number of people who are living on the edge, who exist paycheck to paycheck and who have been foreclosed on, has exploded. If you're choosing between medicine and food, between school supplies for your kids and food, between paying the electric bill and buying food, you are not alone. These are tough choices, and there are parents who are faced with this on a daily basis.

The question was asked if we need to increase the food production to solve this problem. Buffett said, "No." Farmers today are producing more food now than five years ago. People are hungry, not because there are not enough farmers or food, but because they don't have access to it or cannot afford it. There is approximately \$3 billion worth of food wasted; farmers cannot find the labor to harvest it, or the produce does not look perfect enough for store shelves. We need to make this system work better. Food insecurity in American is not black and white, and change does not happen quickly. But if every farmer did a little part, it would happen. It will take one person at a time.

So as we just celebrated the most joyful season, let us remember the reason. God gave his only son to die on the cross so that we could live. What can you do to make a difference? Some of my friends look at me and say I am rich because I own my own business. I am poor, but I am happy. I know that everything I own, I purchased with hard earned money. In today's society, people judge others by the size of their bank account. I can tell you my bank account is small, but my love for God has provided me with more happiness and friends than one can ask for. I own a catering business and when there is food left, I have a call list of needy families to donate the leftover food to. I am not doing what Howard Buffett is doing, but I am doing a part. Can you do a part?

Our State Convention is set for Jan. 10-13, 2013, at the Marriott Town Square in Sugar Land. Mark your calendar for Dec. 4-8, 2013, for the NYFEA and the State Convention at the Omni Colonnade in San Antonio.

In closing, thank you for letting me serve your organization as State President; it has been a great honor. Also, just because I am stepping out of those shoes does not mean my phone will not take your call. I am still here to see this organization grow and will help where ever needed. God Bless!



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TEXAS AG ED FAMILY EVENTS

January 2013

3rd - Ford Leadership Scholars Banquet - Austin

5th - SALE Agriscience Fair Documentation due

7th - Texas FFA Board of Directors Meeting - Austin

17th - Ford Leadership Scholars online submission deadline

18th - Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show begins - Fort Worth

February 2013

7th - 24th - San Antonio Livestock Exposition

9th - Southwestern Exposition and Livestock Show - Fort Worth

9th - SALE Public Speaking Contest - San Antonio

16th - 23rd - National FFA Week

22nd - 24th - SALE Ag Mechanics Show

25th - HLSR begins - Houston

March 2013

1st - Spring Semester FFA Dues Deadline - Austin

4th - TAKS Testing (Grades 10 & 11)

4th - STAAR Testing - English Language Arts

8th - 23rd - Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo

11th - State Tractor Tech CDE - HLSR

15th - 17th - Ag Mechanics Show - HLSR

20th - McClennan Community College Invitational CDEs - Waco

21st - Tarleton State University Invitational CDEs - Stephenville

22nd - WTAMU Invitational CDEs - Canyon

23rd - CDE Clinics - TAMU

23rd - Clarendon College Invitational CDE - Clarendon

26th - Stephen F. Austin Invitational CDEs - Nacogdoches

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