



VATAT

News

A publication of the Texas Agricultural Education Family ☆ 2013 Volume IV, Issue XI

State of the Union

By: Kevin Swor, Diboll

Wow! The school year is over; we are halfway through the summer, and it is almost time to start a new school year. Now, please finish the article because this will not be the typical speech delivered by the President of the USA. Instead I will be honest and unbiased in my approach. What a great time to receive insight from the agricultural science family of Texas.

The buzz word for the last several years is the "Ag Ed Family," so let's start with it. *Family* implies similar people with common goals working together in harmony to achieve the goals. Keep this in mind, Texas agriculture and our Agricultural Education Family will rise together if we are speaking similar messages.

We should never lose our individual identity or waiver our values. We also

will never agree on the approaches or solutions to all problems, but as long as we keep the family in mind we can say the best was accomplished. So how do we rate ourselves in this category?

I believe we would have mixed results if a survey was conducted across the state. As teachers, we only see things through our perspective, but often it is a misinformed view. The people closest to the fire feel the most heat. For example, the area coordinators incur much frustration. They are normally the first and last individuals to get the information. They become the go-between group for teachers, which is a tough job. I admire their willingness to step up to this very active leadership role and commend them for a job well done.

Area coordinators get frustrated if they can not get the answers to their teachers quickly, and oftentimes this issue could be solved with better communication. Over the years, communication has improved in many ways, but the family needs to strive to make excellent communication a top priority.

The FFA Foundation is the biggest supporter that VATAT and the FFA have. The Foundation asks what the teachers and FFA advisors need to make the programs better. Would you believe many don't have an answer to the question? So I ask, do you? At times I am not sure myself.

The Foundation has stepped up to help make the Texas FFA a financially sound organization today and in the future. Do you remember the days when the organization was not sure of its financial future? The Foundation Board of Directors has now asked the same question of the VATAT. I would encourage you to get to know the board members and discover the passion they possess for the youth. It has been a great honor to serve beside them and grow professionally from their knowledge.

So what can they do to help the VATAT? Before you answer the questions think of a few solutions you are willing to offer. The Agricultural Education Family will meet in the fall to update the long range strategic plan. Your VATAT officers will meet prior to then to update our plan. Please provide us feedback of your visions and consider volunteering to serve in this endeavor.

The Texas Young Farmers and the Texas FFA Alumni are part of our family and do not receive as much attention

Continued on page 3



TEXAS AG ED FAMILY UPDATES

VATAT pages 1 - 6
Texas FFA page 8
Foundation page 11
Texas FFA Alumni page 13
Young Farmers pages 14 - 15



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State of the Union

Continued from page 1

as they deserve. Both groups support what we do on a daily basis and need our support to maintain their organizations. Both organizations have representatives who serve on the VATAT and FFA Boards of Directors, so please include them in your family.

The VATAT has had a productive year and a successful legislative year. At the writing of this article the legislature is preparing to go back to work on the state's business. Therefore, the final outcomes of some bills are still vague. Schools should have some of the funding restored. The teacher retirement account will prove to be solid for many years to come. I do not believe the decision on retirement insurance was fair for all, but it could have been worse. Please stay in touch with your representatives to get this reversed.

The VATAT, FFA and Foundation staffs have done a tremendous job this year and have been a pleasure to work with. Mr. McClure has managed our organization with dignity and respect. He has had challenges with the restraints of the budget. The finance committee helped rectify this problem with budget cuts and an increase in membership fees. This increase was necessary and will serve us for many years to come. The Foundation Board has also guided sponsorships our way, and we appreciate their help.

Finally the Agricultural Education Family has established a fund for major building maintenances and repairs. The building is owned by the VATAT but is supported by the rental fees of all entities. Please feel free to visit our building and consider bringing your officer team.

I would encourage all teachers to take a more active role in the ranks of our organization to truly understand the progress that has been made in recent years. I never understood the activities that take place behind the scenes until I decided to serve on the VATAT board and as an officer.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, and I look forward to visiting with you at the conference.

Why Extended Contracts for Agricultural Educators?

Barney McClure, VATAT Executive Director

I was on a 12 month teaching contract my entire teaching career. During that time, other teachers who were maybe a little envious and administrators who were looking at their budget, would sometimes ask why I was on a 12 month contract. I usually replied, only half joking, that it was because they didn't have 13 month contracts.

If you are an agricultural teacher in Louisiana, it is a state law that you are on a 12 month contract. It was similar in Texas 40 years ago. Beginning in the mid 1980s, local schools were given more authority to adjust contracts. We began to see contracts for various numbers of days. A traditional 10 month contract for all teachers could be extended for any number of days, usually up to 226 days. The 226 day contract usually had approximately 40 days included between the last day of in-service and the first day of the next school year's in-service.

Those days are NOT included in your contract to compensate for the holidays, weekends and late nights we invest in our students during the regular school year. I have had teachers tell me they spent 226 days working by mid-May. That is fairly typical for good teachers in our profession. Many school districts offer stipends to make up for this extra time, and they really should. These extra contract days ARE for the time spent during the summer months to put on a high quality program. I can't imagine any great agricultural science program without the teachers on the job during the summer.

According to our fall 2011 survey, 90 percent of agricultural teachers are on some type of extended contract. The majority of that 90 percent are on 12 month contracts. So, what activities should be accomplished during the summer?

Attending the State FFA Convention in mid-July is a key element in any local program. The opportunity to participate in this process is very valuable, although the teachers are on duty 24 hours each day during this five-day event. Participating in the VATAT Professional Development Conference can, in my mind, make the difference between an average program and a great program. The opportunity to get the latest updates in our profession, attend workshops to hone your skills and meet with other teachers and leaders who have the same goals, can be invaluable. This conference takes another five days.

Being a part of the State FFA Degree and Award Check committee can bring about an improved understanding of our program, which can lead to enhanced student performance. This event usually takes three days in mid-June.

Another worthy undertaking involves participating in workshops and skills development programs, many times offered by our university partners. These can range from

Continued on page 5



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Don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Tickets can be purchased during FFA Convention and VATAT Conference at the RiverStar Farms booth. Tickets cost \$5 each or \$20 for five tickets. All funds collected will be donated by RiverStar Farms to benefit the VATAT Scholarship Fund. The winner will be drawn at the VATAT Conference during Family Night. Anyone is eligible; need not be present to win.

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*Tracy, Jody, Drew and Brook Davis,
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A New Face in Team Ag Ed

Kate Murphy of Spring Branch, Texas, recently joined Texas Team Ag Ed as the summer intern and will play an integral role at the annual VATAT Professional Development Conference and the 85th annual Texas FFA State Convention.

Murphy is a junior at Tarleton State University majoring in agricultural communications. She participates in numerous activities on campus including Tarleton Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow, serves as a College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Ambassador and is a member of the livestock judging team.

"Kate has extensive agriculture and communication experience and brings a great understanding of agricultural education to the position," said VATAT Executive Director Barney McClure.

FFA and agricultural education provide premier leadership opportunities, experiential learning and promote academic excellence through a rigorous curriculum combined with practical application and developing relationships.

As the summer intern, Murphy will assist VATAT and Texas FFA staff members with coordinating activities for the convention, which attracts more than 10,000 FFA members and guests, as well as the conference, which more than 1,400 agricultural educators attend.

"This project-based internship brings two of my passions - agriculture and communications - together," Murphy said. "I'm excited to work with the staff, teachers and sponsors of Texas agricultural education."



Contracts for Agricultural Educators

Continued from page 3

agricultural mechanics to training LDE and CDE teams more effectively. Typically these can be three to five days in length.

Many activities during the summer will take place in your own community. Time should be set aside to develop a strategic plan for your program. Having meetings with your Advisory Committee and school administrators to develop this plan is essential. Often, during the school year, we are just too busy to accomplish this. I always tried to make time to meet with the other agricultural groups in the summer. These include the Extension Agents, Farm Service Director and NRCS staff. It is also a good time to visit with representatives of agricultural industries in the community.

There are a variety of FFA camps for students during the summer. Some require participants to be an elected officer, while others are interest specific, like range camp or livestock show camps. Most of these require a teacher supervisor.

That brings us to the Supervised Agriculture Experience (SAE) programs. All active FFA members are required to have a SAE. While there are different types, animal projects are the most popular. Oftentimes, animal projects are procured during the summer, feeding programs are developed and some communities have a summer livestock show. A teacher's presence is a requirement.

An agricultural teacher is responsible for more than their classroom. There is almost always an agricultural mechanics shop to maintain, equipment to repair and a safe learning environment to provide for students. In many cases, there is a school project facility to manage. From personal experience, I can tell you that can be a demanding job. This is also a good time to reorganize and make the facilities neater and more pleasing to visitors.

Summer is always a good time to reflect on your classroom teaching. Improving your yearly teaching plan and individual lesson plans should be an important part of any summer plan. You will be evaluated on your PDAS by how well you teach your classes. Don't let this be an afterthought.

I could discuss many other worthy activities for the summer, but every community is different. The summer is when you set the stage for the year and prepare for enhanced student achievement. Schools that have limited summer programs put their students at a competitive disadvantage for scholarships and other honors compared to schools that have 12 month programs. When schools look to hire a teacher, high quality candidates will look for those places that offer extended contracts.

I spoke with a superintendent recently who told me he wasn't sure if he could afford a 12 month teacher. I simply told him he couldn't afford NOT to hire such a teacher if he wanted a quality program. The difference between an average program and one that is superior can often be traced to extended contracts for the teachers, as well as other support.

2013 VATAT Award Winners

Outstanding School Administrator

Brian Patterson, *Farwell High School*
Reggy Spencer, *Colorado ISD*
Joseph Kolenda, *The Guthrie Center*
Buddy Freeman, *Quanah ISD*
Mac Edwards, *Paradise High School*
Richard Pride, *Van High School*
Becky Burns, *Mildred ISD*
Joy Beverly, *Calallen High School*
Bruce Taylor, *Barbers Hill High School*

Outstanding Cooperation

Ellis Production (Bill and Faye Ellis)
Spring Branch FFA Alumni
Graford Community Association
Wise County Electric Cooperative
Calallen FFA Alumni

Outstanding Television Station

KGLE Channel 3, Allen
Channel 3 News, Corpus Christi

Outstanding Radio Station

GOW Media Yahoo Sports Radio 1560, Houston
Badlands Radio, Corpus Christi

Outstanding Newspaper

Castro County News, Dimmit
The Anson American, Stamford
Mineral Wells Index, Mineral Wells
Allen America, Plano
West Kerr Current, Ingram
Robstown Record Star, Robstown
Baytown Sun, Baytown

Teachers Chapter Publicity & Promotions

Spring Branch FFA, The Guthrie Center
Steve Bradshaw, Paradise FFA

VATAT Awards are sponsored by:



If the award winner for your area is not listed, please contact the VATAT Office.

VATAT Credit Union

800-777-1825

www.vatatcu.org

The VATAT Credit Union would like to announce that we will have four (4) Directors' positions up for election at our 2013 annual meeting. Any member interested in submitting his/her petition for one of the four (4) positions should contact our Nominating Committee no later than July 19, 2013.

Nominating Committee members are:

William Woody: 254-857-4504
 Barney McClure: 512-472-3128
 Steve Forsythe: 512-564-2333



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Texas FFA

Update

SUMMER PRODUCTIVITY

Tom Maynard, Texas FFA Association Executive Director

Most don't consider the summer months in terms of instructional time, but in terms of laying the foundation for true leadership development, it is a critical juncture. Without a productive summer, your student leadership vehicle will likely struggle to get traction in the school year.

In summer's hot dog days, coaches and band directors are focusing on the basics. Marching band works on the all-important glide step. Football players perform tackling drills. For FFA officers, one of the basics is learning ceremony parts. Recently, I attended a local banquet at which officers were reading opening ceremonies. This is inexcusable. Officers should be able to deliver their parts from memory before the first day of class.

When we had our officer retreat, one of our goals was to leave the event with those parts in the memory banks. We would practice before meals. The team had to deliver the ceremony without a bobble before eating. If anyone stumbled, the team was required to start over. Perfect performance was always required for food.

Attending summer leadership camps and conferences are great opportunities for your chapter leaders to build relationships with other leaders at the chapter, district, area and state level. However, this is not a substitute for an effective chapter program of activities. None of us would consider teaching welding only in a classroom setting-discussing welding but never actually doing it.

If all you do is send your members to a camp or conference, all you have done is put your students in a place to talk about leadership. Actually doing it happens when the students jump into the leading of a real organization with real money, real people and real issues. *Learning to do. Doing to learn.*

Chapter planning should start with an honest assessment of where your chapter is today. It is said that the chapter POA is a roadmap. You might know your destination, but using the map requires knowing your current location. A candid listing of the good, bad and ugly is the starting point of the goal setting process.

Your overall chapter goals should address all of the National FFA Organization's quality standards in the areas of student development, chapter development and community development. Every student should be assigned

to a committee, and your committee chairs represent an important talent pool of students who can lead and learn and become officers in the future. They might be students who don't have an interest in being an officer, but can lead in specific projects.

The chapter planning process is an important lesson. Students need to learn how to articulate intended outcomes, develop tactics and timelines and identify success measures. Committees should develop budgets for each project and submit requests to the budget and finance committee. The budget and finance committee should put together the annual budget for the entire chapter, create financial goals and manage the budget for the year. Shortfalls in revenue or overages in expenses often necessitate adjustments. This should sound familiar because this is what happens in businesses, organizations and agencies everywhere. The idea of the hands-on leadership experience is to prepare your future adults for real-life scenarios.

Human resources is one of the toughest management pieces in any organization. Your officers will need to identify and manage talent within the organization - matching tasks with talent, communicating vision and expectations, resolving conflicts, making uncomfortable personnel decisions, motivating, reinforcing, supporting and leading. It all starts in the summer months with a strategic plan called a program of activities.

As you work with your student leaders remember that education is inherently messy and inefficient. Having students build a trailer is probably the least efficient approach to building a trailer, but in that situation, the trailer is not really the main point. It's the process and the learning. Leadership development is no different. Remember that one of your most important roles in the agricultural education model is a facilitator of the hands-on leadership experience. It's hard, messy work that yields huge returns. Building the foundation for it all happens now - in the summer.

News releases from Convention will be available at www.texasffa.org > Events > State Convention > Press Releases.



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Foundation Update

Changing the DNA of the Texas FFA

Aaron Alejandro, Texas FFA Foundation Executive Director

How do we get the type of cattle – or any other species – we want? First, we have to assess what we currently have in our herd. Next, we determine what genetics we want to introduce to improve the herd. We wait through the gestation period. Finally, we look at the improvements in the herd and the offspring to see if we met the target. If successful, what does the calf have to do to be good? Don't look too hard. The answer is absolutely nothing. Improvements are in the DNA.

The strategic efforts of the Texas FFA Foundation, in collaboration with Texas Team Ag Ed, are designed to improve Texas agricultural education and the Texas FFA for a strong sustainable future, because we placed the improved DNA and reaped the rewards.

Let's examine our herd. Do we produce good kids through agricultural education and Texas FFA? You bet. But when we assess, are we satisfied with what we have? Do our former students produce servant leadership and stewardship of their organization? Or do we have a "take only" gene in the herd?

Let's do a quick examination. "Buy my fruit, sausage, cookie dough, a stock show ad, animal and give me that scholarship." Does any of this sound familiar? With all of this taking, are we surprised that students don't give back to the Texas FFA when they leave the ranks of the organization? They have never been trained, taught or observed an example by a teacher on the importance of steward and servant leadership.

Look at the "best of the best," our Texas FFA past state officers. Each year the Past State Officers (PSO) gather at the Texas FFA State Convention for a PSO get together. When asked how many received a FFA or FFA related scholarship, more than 80 percent of the hands go up. When asked if they proudly include they were a Texas FFA State Officer on their resume or when applying for a job, they reply "absolutely."

So, they are proud of the organization, succeeded at the highest levels and enjoyed the greatest benefits of the organization as state officers and scholarship recipients; yet, they are one of the most underperforming individual giving demographics to the Texas FFA. Why? It is not in their DNA, because we taught them to take.

Do you see what's wrong in our herd? Do you see where we have to change some of the DNA to create a more

sustainable Texas agricultural education and FFA?

The DNA is changing. Students and teachers are being exposed to new leadership training opportunities that not only empower and encourage, but put in place a servant and steward leadership style, which is beginning to bear fruit. The Ford Leadership Scholars Program, Foundation Ambassadors, Ethical Leadership Fellows and the Foundation's L.E.A.D. Experience (Leadership, Education, Advocacy, Development) for teachers are beginning to change the DNA of agricultural education and FFA.

Students like Iowa Park native Molly Dutton, who is the youngest Citizen of the Year in her community and has a park that she helped restore named in her honor, understand the value of giving back. Saltillo native Chanda Neal took the skills she learned in the Ambassador program back to her community to help expand the efforts of the local FFA chapter reach more students and raise record levels to support local charities.

I recently had the pleasure of speaking at the Alba-Golden FFA banquet in East Texas. According to Wikipedia, Alba has a population of 430, and Golden doesn't have a population. Following my presentation on stage, the students were beaming and asked me to come back on stage. Why? When the students called me back to the stage, they were excited to present a check to the Texas FFA Foundation for \$1,000 from the silent auction to support the future of agricultural education and FFA!

This testifies to the changing DNA of Texas FFA members.

The students knew it was important, because the individuals they know, trust and respect – their teachers – helped them understand the benefits of servant and steward leadership. The students now have a sense that giving back to the FFA is a way to ensure others have more opportunities in the future. Students, teachers and community collaborated to ensure a stronger future for our organization.

To all the teachers, students and sponsors who made last year one of our best years for individual giving, we thank you. To those who are watching to see what's next, take a page out of the Molly Dutton's, Chanda Neal's or Alba-Golden FFA's playbook and give back, because the rewards are greater than one may ever understand.

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Texas FFA Alumni

Update

Time

Kelly White, Texas FFA Alumni President

[*Of all the things I've lost, I miss my mind the most.*]
 - Mark Twain

By the time you read this article I hope you have found some time to prep for convention, worked with your FFA officers and spent quality time with your family. I hope you are working on your farmer's tan, golf swing or found your favorite fishing spot. I hope you find time for yourself.

I hope you find time to reflect upon the past year. I know there are several areas I need to polish. I also hope to find time to reflect on the year with my teaching partner and discuss the Program of Activities (POA) for the upcoming year with our FFA officers.

This year it seems our POA was a Plan of Attack rather than a Program of Activities (nothing personal to my locals reading this article). We started the year trying new activities and working with new students, parents, administrators and a new community. I felt like a beginning teacher all over again. I started this year's article talking about my employment status and attending new teachers' in-service.

Now, I feel like a seasoned veteran again. However, I still need a map when I go to the main campus for ARD's and other meetings. This year went well. I worked with a great set of officers and worked with an extremely active Alumni affiliate.

The Texas FFA Alumni Board of Directors has been preparing for the 85th annual Texas FFA State Convention. We have chosen our two \$1,000 scholarship recipients and selected our ten \$500 grant winners. Also, The Texas FFA Association, the Texas FFA Foundation and the VATAT have received donations from the Texas FFA Alumni Association.

We have secured items from various vendors. The items include fencing material, boots, ice chests, hotel stays, tools, jewelry and many more items. You can lose your mind at our auction, and we won't care. We accept cash, checks and credit cards.

Liz Treptow, Wade Albert and Kevin Page deserve a special thank you for their work on the Alumni Board. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

ALUMNI CHAPTER BASKET CONTEST

Each alumni chapter may enter one basket. It may have homemade goodies, jellies, items made by local companies, home made items, items from the local ag department, caps, etc.

The baskets will be judged on a penny (\$.01) per vote. The basket with the most votes in the 24-hour period will receive the rotating "Basket Winner" plaque. The baskets become the property of the Texas FFA Alumni Association and will be sold in the auction on Thursday evening.

CONTEST RULES

1. Baskets need to be delivered to the FFA Alumni booth by 4 p.m. Tuesday, July 10, and the contest ends Wednesday, July 11.
2. A list of the items included in the basket should be clearly labeled on the basket.
3. The basket can be of any creation.

VATAT AWARDS

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Texas Young Farmers Update

From the President's Pen

Barry Choate, Texas Young Farmers President

We are gearing up for an extra tour to kick off a great National Young Farmers Institute in San Antonio this December. Several states have expressed interest in visiting the King Ranch, so we will offer a King Ranch Tour Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2013.

Approximately 60,000 acres of the King Ranch are under cultivation. Grain sorghum (milo) and cotton are the major crops grown in South Texas. The King Ranch maintains its own cotton gin and grain storage facilities.

I have asked for the cotton operation to be the primary focus of the tour, and there will be someone available to answer questions.

In addition, we will be given the historical tour that begins at the historic Santa Gertrudis Creek where Captain King first camped in 1852. Modern brush cleaning equipment and land going leviathans conceived and developed on King Ranch to clear mesquite and huisache from the pastures have found a permanent parking place nearby. Continuing your trip, the guide will explain the history and the modern day workings of the ranch, including the Calera Pens where cattle are vaccinated, branded and tagged.

Watch for the auction arena, the horse cemetery and the Colony – home of the Kinenos or King's Men. Other historic buildings on the tour include Mrs. King's carriage house,

the Commissary with its lookout tower and the grand home built in 1912 by Captain King's widow, Henrietta.

Ring the cook's dinner bell and experience a barbeque at a historic King Ranch cowboy camp house. Lunch will include beef brisket and smoked sausage prepared over a mesquite wood fire, potato salad or coleslaw, camp beans, relishes and a beverage.

Several areas of agricultural history got its start from the King Ranch. Whether you are interested in farming, ranching, wildlife management or the horse industry, there should be something for everyone to enjoy and learn.

I hope that fellow Texans will join in the fun and fellowship while observing some of the treasures we have in our own back yard, as well as helping us show off south Texas to our guests from other states.

Visit <http://www.txyoungfarmers.org/> for updated information on the NYFEA and other activities happening with the Texas Young Farmers.



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FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Don Beene, Texas Young Farmers Executive Secretary

We would love to have each of you visit our booth at the Texas FFA State Convention and VATAT Professional Development Conference. We have gained several new chapters since last year, and we are here to answer questions and help with your program.

There will be a major change in our State Young Farmers Convention this year as we will meet with the National Young Farmers. In fact, we will be hosting the National Young Farmer Convention Dec. 4-7, 2013, at the Omni Colonnade Hotel in San Antonio. Everyone, not just Young Farmers or those with a Young Farmers Chapter, is invited.

Hotel rooms are \$99 per night, and three meals a day Thursday, Friday and Saturday will be included in your registration fee. If you can only attend two days, the registration fee will be reduced.

On Thursday, following the visit to James Madison Magnet Vocational Agriculture Facility, we will spend the day in downtown San Antonio. Thursday evening we will be at the hotel and the theme is Taste of Texas. We will have a variety of foods for the evening meal

including seafood, steak, chicken, Mexican, German and much more. Also, samples of the grapes and hops that are processed in Texas will be available.

Friday we will visit the LBJ Ranch and school house. The Athens Young Farmers will be preparing a fajita lunch. In addition to the ranch, we will also visit the wild seed farm and wineries in the area. Friday evening's activities will take place in Luckenbach. A steak dinner will be prepared by the Limestone County Young Farmers, and live band will be playing after dinner.

The national meetings will be held Saturday morning, and Texas Young Farmers will conduct its business meeting Saturday afternoon. We will also have our scholarship auction late that afternoon along with the national auction, so please bring items to be auctioned.

Make plans for a family vacation Dec. 4-7 and attend the National and Texas Young Farmers Institute.

See ya at the FFA Convention, VATAT Conference and the Young Farmer Convention!



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TEXAS AG ED FAMILY EVENTS

2013 State Fair Validation Information

All manila forms, hair envelopes, ethics policies, committee forms and Excel spreadsheets are due in the FFA office on or before July 5, 2013. Manilas, hair envelopes and ethic policies must be in alphabetical order.

Any change to the tag's size, shape, form or color will void the tag. The tag will be replaced at the stock show and replacement cost will be charged to the individual.

Ear notch correction & ear tag replacement forms must be faxed (512-476-2894) to the FFA office on or before July 16, 2013.

Any required validation information not in the FFA office by July 16, 2013 will not be validated. Information is due July 5. We do not have personnel in the office to process or call for missing validation items after this date.

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 of Texas

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