



# BLUE AND GOLD

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FFA Happenings

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## State Officer First Impressions

*Pennsylvania State FFA Officer Team*

### Timber Thebes PA FFA President

The excitement had set in immediately as I was sworn into my office position. The following days seemed to be out of a storybook as letters, flowers flooded my life as my friends, family, and even strangers congratulated me. The next few weeks, I learned who my teammates were and what we wanted to accomplish as a team. This group of individuals inspired and never ceased to amaze me as we organized events, visited many supporters of the association, talked to our first group of FFA members, and spoke with elected officials. Now, my teammates and I are working to organize the larger events that are yet to come in our year of service. From day one to day 60, my wish is to reach our nearly 13,000 Pennsylvania FFA members in the hopes of inspiring as many as I can to pursue FFA through high school and later choose agricultural occupations to support our nation and world!

### Brandon Bixler PA FFA Vice president

Since being elected, I have grown so much as a person and have become fully immersed in FFA and the broader agriculture industry. The training I have received has provided me with practical ways to be a better leader, and I am excited to soon begin facilitating workshops. I have met new advisers and students from all around the state, and these interactions with members have been some of my highlights thus far. Business and industry visits have also opened my eyes to the many possibilities within agriculture, and I have gained insight into the importance of a connected and unified agriculture industry. Although I may be deferring college for a year, my experience so far has been a time of learning and growth more than ever before.

### Michael Riggs PA FFA Secretary

"Never let this sink in." These are the some of the words that our team heard right after being elected. Shea Booster, National FFA Western Region Vice President said these words to us as he explained the importance of never losing that sense of euphoria and feeling of being on cloud nine directly after being elected. In the weeks since, these five simple words have helped to guide me as I face new challenges and push myself out of my comfort zone every single day. From meeting U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue to having a meeting with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the opportunities that have been presented to me have been far beyond what I could have ever imagined. I am excited to continue to serve the industry and organization that I have come to love so much.

### Killiann George PA FFA Treasurer

Growth. The first 60 days of serving the Pennsylvania FFA State Association as the 2019-2020 state treasurer have been full of growth. Whether it was learning about team dynamics or how to be a better advocate for the association, the members, and the industry, growth occurred. I enjoy having opportunities to meet with a variety of business representatives and sponsors to begin building a strong network to utilize as a future educator. Alongside these meetings, beginning to interact with students throughout workshops and team building challenges pushed me to grow as a person, mentor, and friend! I cannot believe we are already 60 days in, but I look forward to another 10 months full of growth.

### Thomas Strong PA FFA Reporter

These first 60 days in office have truly been an experience of a lifetime. From being able to work with members during the Western Pennsylvania Leadership Conference, to being able to meet USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue, every week has been filled with new ways to show my passion for agriculture. I have personally wanted to run for state office since I was a freshman in high school, and now it is exactly what I dreamed it would be. I have been blessed with six teammates that challenge me to be a better state officer for myself and our association. As we move throughout our year of service, I am beyond excited for the opportunities that this year will afford me and the chance to reach more of our nearly 13,000 members across the commonwealth.

### Arilyn Oatman PA FFA Sentinel

When my name was called back in June, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of awe — this couldn't possibly be happening to me! This feeling has stayed with me every day that I zip up that association jacket and go out with my team. In just the short 60 days we have been blessed with, we have been given countless opportunities to build connections and grow; not only as a team but also as individuals. State office has been a true blessing and I cannot wait to see what the future holds for myself and my team.

### McKenzie Glass PA FFA Chaplain

My first two months as a state officer have been amazing and hectic. For me the first week I was just completely star-struck. During that week when I woke up every morning, I had to watch the session 3 video on YouTube to make sure that it actually happened. Every day of state office has new adventures and learning opportunities for my team and me, and it is just an indescribable moment when we put on our jackets to learn and advocate about agriculture.



The Pennsylvania FFA state officers at the signing of the Pennsylvania Farm Bill

## Perry County Farm-to-Fork Dinner

The FFA Chapters of Perry County are excited to again team up with Perry County FFA Alumni members to hold the fourth annual Perry County FFA Alumni Farm to Fork Dinner on Sept. 21, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Perry County Fairgrounds. This new tradition has become an incredibly successful event that gives the chapters an opportunity to highlight their successes as well as giving Alumni a venue to continue to support the local FFA chapters while catching up with old friends and enjoying a great evening of fellowship. This year's menu will feature all foods that are raised in Perry County, including beef, pork, baked potatoes, corn, chicken corn soup, cole

slaw, apple dumplings, apple crisp, pumpkin dessert and ice cream. Each year, a highlight of the event is watching alumni members perform the FFA opening ceremony. This year, all former state FFA officers from Perry County will be on hand to share the opening ceremony with the crowd.

A new addition to the event this year is the Alumni Career Development Event Showdown. Alumni will be challenged with practicum information of current FFA CDEs to test their agricultural knowledge and potentially win fun prizes.

Tickets are \$10 per person and can be purchased by calling Krista Pontius at 717-385-6015.



Former chapter presidents performed the opening ceremonies at the third annual Farm to Fork Dinner.

## Pennsylvania Golden Owl Award



Agricultural educators are a different breed of teachers. They teach, mentor and inspire thousands of kids to be the best they can be across the country. These individuals help students unlock their potential and give them skills that can be used in the agricultural industry and beyond. Agricultural educators also serve as FFA advisers to give students opportunities for years to come.

Being an agricultural educator brings along early mornings, long nights and constant change to adapt to an ever-changing industry.

Being an agricultural educator takes heart and soul that few other jobs demand. Ag Educators don't always get the recognition they deserve. Presented by Nationwide, the Pennsylvania FFA and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, the Golden Owl Award helps to fix this problem and make sure they are recognized for all their achievements by their students and their colleagues.

The Golden Owl Award is presented to four educators across the state, one of which will be chosen as agricultural educator of the

year. Those selected as regional winners for the award will receive \$500 along with an engraved plaque. The honoree selected as the state winner will receive \$3,000. To be selected to receive the award, an agricultural educator must be nominated by a student, fellow teacher, and or supporter. The nominator will be asked to include a summary of what makes their nominee the best in the state. Applications can be obtained by using the link, [https://pages.nationwide.com/OWL\\_2019/](https://pages.nationwide.com/OWL_2019/). Applications close Nov. 16.