



BLUE AND GOLD

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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Grand Canyon FFA Chapter Produces Maple Syrup For Unique Ag Experience

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Grand Canyon FFA

Last year, the Grand Canyon FFA chapter from Wellsboro started a maple syrup project at their school. In years past, students from Wellsboro Area High School have tapped trees at the school on a smaller scale during class. It was difficult to produce syrup in that short amount of time. This dilemma sparked the start of the chapter's sugar shack. This expanding project was started after the chapter adviser Melanie Berndtson wrote a grant application to help pay for the evaporator and tubing supplies for the project. The chapter's maple syrup operation now consists of an evaporator, a holding tank, taps and buckets.

This past year, nearly 75 sugar maple trees were tapped, all of which were on school property. From these trees, nearly 560 gallons of sap were collected. Seeing that it takes roughly 40 gallons of sap to create one gallon of syrup, the chapter had boiled down the sap to around 14 gallons of maple syrup. Ideal weather conditions for tapping trees for sap consist of below freezing temperatures at night and mid-40 F degree weather during the day. During most of this past spring, the temperatures had stayed too low during the day for the sap in the trees to warm up and run into the taps.

The Grand Canyon FFA hopes that the weather will be more cooperative this spring so they will be able to produce a larger volume of syrup. They plan to eventually make enough syrup to donate some to their school board and to sell some of it as well. The chapter would also like to be able to use their maple syrup at their local farmer pancake breakfast event during National FFA Week.

Many school students and FFA members were able to learn about maple syrup production through this project. There were several ways that these students and members were able to participate in the making of the syrup. The school's natural resource management class spent class time to go outside and get hands on experience with the project coordinators, Jason Vandergrift and Greg Berndtson. Members were able to get involved with the project during free time they had during the school day. Many members even stayed after school to work with the maple sugar project.

Once the maple syrup had been produced, the hard working members were able to enjoy what they had created. Maple sugar candies and pancakes were made to allow the students to consume the product they had worked on. The chapter members will be working on this project every spring and hope to see it becoming more successful each year.



FFA members tap a tree.

Bringing People Together From Farm to Fork

The Perry County FFA chapters and alumni chapter are joining together to host the third annual Perry County FFA Alumni Farm to Fork dinner on Sept. 22 at the Perry County Fairgrounds.

The Farm to Fork dinner is a collaboration of the community to support local FFA programs.

The donated food at the meal comes from Perry County farmers. The meal will consist of roast beef, pulled pork, baked potatoes, corn, coleslaw, chicken corn soup, apple crisp and ice cream.

In addition to the meal, there will be a silent and live auction. State Rep. Mark Keller from Perry County will once again volunteer his time as the auctioneer for the evening. Newport alumni Thomas Gabel said, "Few events have the ability to bring a community together for one collective purpose like the Perry County Farm to Fork dinner. Each year, I am continually amazed by the laughter, love, excitement and of course, home-grown, Perry County food that is shared with an incredible group of agricul-



FFA alumni conduct the opening ceremonies at a past Perry County FFA Alumni Farm to Fork dinner.

tural supporters."

This year will be emceed by Greenwood FFA alumni, former State FFA President and Pennsylvania's national FFA officer candidate Libby Baker-Mikesell.

West Perry FFA alumni Kelsey Henry Smith said, "I enjoy the Farm to Fork dinner because it allows our community members from different industries and backgrounds to come together to support agricultural education and our FFA members."

Attendees will be wowed with a parliamentary procedure demonstration by county FFA members and puzzled by Perry County FFA trivia which was organized by Virgil Gutshall,

retired as the Newport FFA adviser.

Each year, different individuals are asked to take part in opening ceremonies. Last year, opening ceremonies were done by all former, current, or future ag teachers in Perry County. This year will feature former Perry County FFA presidents.

Heather Brummer, Greenwood FFA Alumni and member of the event committee said, "For many of us, our membership in FFA were life changing experiences. FFA provides skills not required in a standardized test, but skills and relationships that they will use the rest of their lives. Anything the alumni can do to promote the FFA by financial support, advocacy, or expert advice will ensure the stability of these programs in our schools. Farm to Fork is a way we have linked these support systems together for our FFA programs in Perry County."

Tickets can be purchased by contacting Krista Pontius at 717-589-3116 ext. 1209 or kpontius@greenwoodsd.org.

Building a Circle of Community

FROM THE OFFICERS STATION

Growing up in a small town and being involved in many activities, I learned very quickly how important the sense of community is. Whether that was playing sports, going to Boy Scouts, or hanging out with friends and family on the weekends I always knew that I had a support system anywhere I went. When I first stepped into my agricultural education classroom, I was not sure what to expect at all. I knew my brother was involved in FFA before me and he really seemed to enjoy it, so I figured that I would probably like it too.

I walked into the classroom that first day of an agriculture education class and was greeted by my teacher and about 20 other students. I knew a couple of the students, so of course I immediately migrated towards them. However, as the year went on, my classmates and I built such a tight-knit bond that I could not imagine the classroom without them.

I remember my first ever ACES (Agricultural Cooperation Establishes Success) Conference, I was so nervous because when we were split up into workshop groups none of my friends from my home chapter were with me. Then right away in my first workshop I attended, we did an activity where we mixed and mingled with other members to get to know one another. By the end of the workshops I was very upset to leave my group because I had created so many great friendships with fellow members from all across Pennsylvania.

Fast forward four years to the 2018 Pennsylvania FFA State Convention and Activities Week, and there I am, standing on stage after the third and final session with six other people who were selected to be my fellow teammates. The feelings and emotions that day could not be put into words. I knew that at that point I was



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going to be in for an exciting year, and I was going to make some of the closest friends I would ever have.

Now almost four months into our roles we have learned so much and cannot wait to put our learning into action. With chapter visits just getting started and the Fall

Leadership Conference right around the corner, we as a team cannot wait to see all of the FFA members in Pennsylvania.

Much like at my first FFA conference or my first day in agriculture education, I hope that everyone finds their community through agriculture education and FFA.

The theme for the Pennsylvania FFA this year is "Unlimited," and as the year progresses, it is a goal of our team to see that all FFA members learn about the unlimited opportunities there are in agriculture education and FFA. It was through the unlimited opportunities in FFA that I found my community, my home away from home and my passion. I found out through my experiences at my local chapter and meeting almost 300 other state officers at the State Officer Summit this year at Washington, D.C., that FFA is truly a community of some of the greatest people you will ever meet from all over the country.

I hope that all members feel that sense of community when they are at the conferences, conventions or events through the year, because your time in the blue jacket will go faster than expected.

The saying, "You might outgrow the jacket, but you'll never outgrow the experience" is so true, because after you hang up your blue corduroy jacket for the last time, you will always have those experiences and the FFA community supporting you for the rest of your life.

Editor's note: Jacob Kinzer is the Pennsylvania FFA vice president.



FFA chapter displays from the Farm to Fork Dinner.