



BLUE AND GOLD

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

ACTIVATE: Purpose-Passion-Potential

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Oley Valley Members ‘Learn by Doing’



Chapter
Spotlight

JILL PALMER
Pennsylvania FFA State Reporter

This month’s FFA chapter spotlight shines on the Oley Valley FFA chapter in Oley, Pennsylvania.

For Hannah Levensgood, a senior at Oley Valley High School, FFA has offered her some of her favorite experiences. “Although I dread the day when I’ll put my jacket on for the last time, I can’t help (but) be excited for the younger members that will join FFA in my shadow, and hope that they too are able to find their passion through this amazing organization,” she said.

Agriculture instructors Jeremy Deysher and Kacey Rice take pride in their students’ work ethic as they see them excel in various course



Polly Prout looks for suckers on the tomato plants in her plant science and horticulture class.

offerings such as FFA leadership, agricultural business, environmental science and advanced animal science.

As if education wasn’t a big enough task to manage, the approximately 125 FFA members strive to be a voice for agriculture in and out of their classrooms. During the Oley Valley Community Fair, members operate a “Farmer for a Day” tent where members teach children the importance of agriculture through activities. This FFA chapter also puts on events like community pot pie dinners, an FFA alumni Christmas dinner, and a faculty “thank you” breakfast. Another community service project is the graveyard preservation project to clean up cemeteries and make them presentable for families.



In the “Farmer for a Day” tent at the Oley Valley Community Fair, FFA members help younger children complete various games including becoming a grocer, a farmer and milking a cow.

Five years ago, the chapter received a National FFA Food for All grant. With this grant, they built six raised bed gardens where the members grow



Students plant lettuce seeds in the Hydroponics system. From left are Alexa Scatamachia, Mark Gordan and Thomas Laub.

vegetables and donate them to the Oley Valley Food Pantry. Additions have also included a new indoor grow room where members have aquaponics and hydroponics units. Four years ago, Oley Valley received the \$10,000 Grow Rural Monsanto Education Grant to purchase an aquaponics unit where 55 tilapia call home. The lettuce that is raised in both systems is donated to the cafeteria and used in the salad bar.

Success is also defined for this chapter with its list of awards including multiple first-place team and individual awards at past national FFA conventions when students were competing in their career development events against other top teams in the nation.

At the Pennsylvania FFA Mid-Winter Convention, seven first-year Oley Valley members received their FFA jacket through the alumni association. Six seniors received their Keystone Degree, the highest honor in the state of Pennsylvania that an FFA member can receive.

The past years have surely told a story since the charter of this chapter in 1932.

Hayden Phillips, a sophomore at Oley Valley High School, is telling the story of working hard. “Out of all the things I’ve learned and experienced since I put on my blue and gold jacket, I think that the most substantial would be to be humble and proud of who I am and where I come from. You can succeed greatly through this organization, but it all comes back to where you begin and who helped you along the way.”



Submitted photos

Oley Valley members Nate Guldin and Hannah Levensgood received Eastern Region Stars for their outstanding Keystone Degree applications and SAE projects. Guldin was also selected as the State Keystone Star in Agribusiness and will compete at the Big E.

ACES — Establishing Leaders and Good Citizens

JILL PALMER
Pennsylvania FFA State Reporter

With four months left in the 2016-2017 Pennsylvania State FFA Officers year of service, February is sure to be an adventurous month. Not only is February the month that holds National FFA Week, but three weekends of the ACES, or the Agricultural Cooperation Establishes Success Conference, will be held.

Nineteen years ago the first ACES conference was held and has since become a staple in the year of conventions, visits and conferences that Pennsylvania FFA members can enjoy. Held at the Harrisburg-Hershey Sheraton, students have three weekends available to attend.

Each weekend registration will reach up to 500 students and their advisers. Students will embark on their journey to Harrisburg with their advisers and arrive on a Saturday morning. Their first day begins with opening ceremonies from the state officer team and various workshops. During workshops students will engage in activities on topics ranging from agriculture across the United States, communicating the brand and de-

fining success, as well as presentations from the Pennsylvania Alumni Association. After their workshops, students are invited to dinner. A presentation for the agricultural educators in the room gets the crowd roaring in laughter and excitement as teachers dance and sing fan-favorite tunes. Shortly after, the party begins in the ballroom with a dance. Reflections by state officers wrap up the day.

Sunday morning is still full of fun as the state chaplain Tricia Hojnowski gives a time of inspiration. This year, the Pennsylvania FFA Foundation has used a grant recently awarded to them by the National FFA Organization to teach 500 students about hunger in their backyards as well as develop plans to put an end to hunger and food insecurity.

The theme for this year’s conference has been “Journey,” which has inspired members to continue their journey to success in the FFA by seeking all opportunities given to them. The state officer team looks forward to seeing more members as we take the time to “Activate” our purpose, passion and potential.

From Alan Jackson to Michael Jackson

FROM THE OFFICERS STATION

Growing up, I was known in my family for being the one who is always singing. Whether in the car, in the mall and even at the table, you just could not stop me from singing for all to hear. I like to say I grew up on the Jacksons, Michael Jackson and Alan Jackson. While in the car with my mom, we would listen to “Drive” by Alan Jackson on repeat, but while driving in my dad’s jeep we would listen to “Beat It” by Michael Jackson. Two very different styles of music, and two legends in their genre.

A few months ago, I visited my mom who lives in Memphis, Tennessee, known for blues, soul and rock ‘n roll. I was so excited to be in a city that revolves around music. While there, we went to the legendary Sun Studio. Some artists who have recorded there are Elvis, B.B. King, and Johnny Cash. We even got to take a picture with the mic stand that Elvis used to record his first song. My visit to Memphis was filled to the brim with what I love most. I had the best time singing along to classics and walking in the foot-



SARAH GONZALEZ

steps of so many famous artists.

When I found out I could combine the two things I love the most, music and FFA, I was beyond excited. The state officers were looking for students to sing the national anthem at State Convention at Penn State. So I sent in a tape and found out I was selected. The morning of the session I was singing at, I was beyond nervous. So, I thought of everything I did before I went in to compete in a career development event. I shook out the nerves, had a bottle of water ready, and I made sure I had my lucky headband on. Soon, the nerves morphed into mere butterflies and I went out on stage and sang.

My love of music has brought me closer to my teammates, as well. From jamming with Garrett to Chris Stapleton, to listening to Hamilton with Libby. My teammates will always embrace my love of music, and jam right alongside me. I am cherishing the time I have with them, from the small moments, to the big.

Editor’s note: Sarah Gonzalez is the Pennsylvania FFA state secretary.