



BLUE AND GOLD

MAKE YOUR
MARK

Pennsylvania
FFA Happenings

www.paffa.org

A Farewell from the 2019-2020 Pennsylvania State Officers

Timber Thebes — President
Pennsylvania FFA, you provided us with the experience of a lifetime. I am going to have to work very hard to find a year more rewarding than this. My teammates and I built connections with over 13,000 unique individuals, traveled across the state, talked to farmers, agriculturalists and business leaders. We learned a lot about ourselves in the process, too. This year truly has gone by in the blink of an eye. Each time I blink, I find myself somewhere new, in a new lesson, at a new destination, or even in a new chapter. But most importantly, I find myself gaining more belief and more fascination in you, because you are the next agricultural leader, speaker, learner, achiever and you get to go experience this world with a different set of eyes. Your eyes have seen agricultural education, and that might be the greatest gift of all.



Brandon Bixler — Vice President
This year feels impossible to sum up in several sentences, probably because of the countless things it means to me. Perhaps the best way to put it is a year of growth — in connection, passion and perspective. I have traveled to many different places and met some incredible people. I will look back on this year as a time when I made friendships and relationships that I treasure dearly. I have also realized how awesome it is to be a part of this organization, and have seen how each one of us (members, advisers and everyone in between) has a purpose and a belonging in the FFA.



Lastly, I have experienced growth in my perspective — gaining in knowledge and wisdom in what it means to live a good life. I used to think this year would be the best year of my life, and while it truly has been everything I wanted and more, it has most importantly shown me that every day, week, and year can be our best one if we choose to make it so. Thank you, Pennsylvania FFA, for this privilege and opportunity.

Arilyn Oatman — Sentinel
When this dream became a reality, I was beyond excited anticipating everything that was to come. Although there were some bumps in the road, this year was everything I had imagined and more. The memories that I made in the blue and gold will be close to my heart forever. None of this would have been possible without the nearly 13,000 outstanding Pennsylvania FFA members who taught me just as much as I taught them. As I move forward from FFA I know I will always remember the adventure embarked on this year.



McKenzie Glass — Chaplain
When I think back on this year as a state officer, many things flood my mind, like trips, encountering members and spending time with my teammates. This year has been a roller coaster ride of different feelings and emotions. But if I had to describe the year in one word, it would be wow. Every single time I zipped up my jacket I knew I was going to experience something great, and every experience I have been in was a wow moment. I couldn't imagine spending my year in any other way.



Thomas Strong — Reporter
Looking back on the past year, it seems like it has lasted mere seconds. I have had the time of my life serving the Pennsylvania FFA. Being able to travel across the state has broadened my horizons more than I ever thought possible. The people I've met, the places I've been, and the experiences I have been lucky enough to have are all unforgettable. I have learned so much about myself and this great country of ours because of this year. I know now that it is important to be yourself because there is only one you in the whole world. Thank you, Pennsylvania FFA, for the experience of a lifetime and for making me who I am today.



Michael Riggs — Secretary
This year sure has been one to remember. Many of us might be very disappointed how this year has turned out; it is important that our mission trumps our method. As FFA members, we are living to serve. In times like this, we cannot let that core value go by the wayside. We must innovate and be creative in our actions. We must also be deliberate in how we move forward. While this lesson is a hard one to learn, I thank each and every one of you for working together building the amazing sense of community that we strive for in this association. I love you all so much, and thank you for making your mark on me.



Killiann George — Treasurer
This year has been a dream come true. Every little moment, every member, every jacket zip-up left a permanent mark on my life. This year has also been a year of growth. We were told at the beginning of our year that we would face challenges, but I'm sure nobody expected a global pandemic. However, FFA members have never stepped away from a challenge and now is no different. Pennsylvania FFA members have reminded me throughout this year that no matter the challenge we can overcome it and come out stronger because of it. I would like to simply say thank you to the nearly 13,000 FFA members for the honor of serving and for every little moment this year.



Clockwise from right, Killiann George, Michael Riggs, Thomas Strong, TimberThebes, Arilyn Oatman, McKenzie Glass and Brandon Bixler.

Pennsylvania FFA photos

FFA Members Can Connect Through the Forever Blue Network

National FFA Organization

Looking for an easy way to stay connected to the global FFA community? You're in luck. The Forever Blue Network, which debuted on May 11, gives FFA members, alumni and supporters the opportunity to come together no matter where they are. All that's required is internet access.

"The Forever Blue Network is a personal and professional development network that's completely devoted to FFA and information that pertains to the organization," says Joshua Rusk, executive director of National FFA Alumni and Supporters. "You can share memories, reconnect with friends you met through FFA, look for job or internship opportunities and get plugged into what's going on in FFA right now."

To ensure the Forever Blue Network stays safe and secure, all applications are screened before they're approved. Those with FFA IDs — unique identification numbers assigned to individual profiles in the national FFA database — are more quickly accepted into the network, while others may require a more in-depth review and may wait as many as three business days to receive access.

Currently, only the FFA members in the class of 2021 and older are approved to join, which Rusk says is due to the broad age range of alumni and supporters.

"Extensive security measures are in place to safeguard the Forever Blue Network, because safety is our top priority," Rusk says. "If someone is not an FFA member or alumni and wants to join, we ask for additional information before approving their application. We want our users to feel secure and to enjoy using this network without having to wade through spam or inappropriate content."

Forever Blue Network users can post in and peruse the feed, and interact with fellow users' posts, similar to a Facebook or LinkedIn experience, as well as search for alumni mentors or scroll through the job board.

Groups are also part of the Forever Blue Network, giving users the opportunity to connect on an even deeper level. For example, members from the class of 2020 can join the Grad2020 group and share favorite memories from their time in FFA and what they'll miss, along with photos in albums such as Seniors with Their Blue and Gold and FFA in Caps and Gowns.

"Think of the Forever Blue Network as your one-stop shop for all things FFA," Rusk says. "It's a unique way of leveraging the network of FFA members and alumni around the globe to benefit both job seekers and employers while also enhancing the work being done at the local level. It creates a safe space to rekindle or develop personal connections, as well as gain new ideas."

Visit ForeverBlueNetwork.org to join and start connecting.