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Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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Pennsylvania FFA photo

The Pennsylvania FFA officer team with some of the AgChoice Farm Credit team.

After 28 Years, Pennsylvania FFA Has an American Star Farmer Finalist

Alayna Harrell
Pennsylvania FFA Reporter

The American Degree is the highest degree an FFA member can receive. Less than 1% of FFA members receive their American Degree. Out of the all the American Degree recipients in the U.S., 16 Star Finalists will be selected. Four finalists are selected in each category: American Star Farmer, American Star in Agribusiness, American Star in Agricultural Placement; and American Star in Agriscience. This is the first time since 1992 that Pennsylvania FFA association has had a finalist. Being an American Star Farmer finalist is something that Mikara Anderson of the Southern Huntington FFA chapter has dreamed of for some time.

"I never expected to read my name on the finalist list, but regardless, I wanted my enterprise to be elaborate and developed. Having the opportunity to be a star finalist is a testament to the hard work I have put into my operation and all of the knowledge and skills I have learned along the way," she said.

Anderson has 11 supervised agriculture experience projects, nine of which qualified her for Star American Farmer. Her projects have included Hampshire, Montadale, Natural Colored, commercial (Hampshire-Suffolk cross), and Icelandic breeding sheep, market lambs, market swine, market goats, New Zealand rabbit breeding, and an unpaid placement dairy project where she leased two dairy cows. Anderson is solely responsible for the feeding, breeding, maintaining, shearing, and raising of all her livestock.

Anderson has a broad interest in all things agriculture, but she has especially enjoyed her sheep projects.

"I breed sheep to produce predictable offspring suitable for becoming stud rams and brood ewes in show flocks, and I am particularly interested in showing genetic gain from one generation to the next," Anderson said.

Not only does Anderson show her sheep, but she also raises commercial and crossbred market lambs that are sold to 4-H and FFA members. These sheep have been shown at local, state and national shows. Through Anderson's SAE project, she has expanded her sheep breeding operation to 95-120 head (depending on the season).

Her hard work and dedication are something that many FFA members strive for in their SAE projects. Without hard work, she would not be where she is today. Anderson has this piece of advice to any FFA member who would like to try for Star American Farmer.

"Believe you can, and you will. I started with one rare breeding ewe and little knowledge of the lamb and wool industry. I set my mind and heart to gathering information and expanding my operation over the following years. Looking back, I never would have thought I would come this far, but I did, and so can you."

This November at the National FFA Convention, Anderson will compete alongside three other finalists for the title of American Star Farmer.



Pennsylvania FFA Photo

Mikara Anderson with her sheep. Anderson is Pennsylvania's finalist for the National FFA's American Star Farmer. Each of her 11 supervised agriculture experiences have been focused on livestock production.

There Is More to Come This Year

EMMA MUSSER

Pennsylvania FFA Chaplain

What this year holds for our state officer team is beyond me. It is a year of transitioning from the normal ways of executing tasks to navigating a new life situation. In the words of our executive director, our team is "rewriting a 90-year long book." If I am being honest, this task seems very daunting, but with one step at a time, we are starting a new chapter for the Pennsylvania FFA Association.

Our year started by being elected over Zoom, but we were able to meet one another two days after. We are very blessed to have met in person so soon.

Since then, our team has attended two state office training sessions through National FFA — learning how to conduct ourselves as officers and the basics of facilitating workshops. We have attended the state officer summit, also hosted by the national FFA officers, where we met state officers from across the nation.

With multiple Zoom meetings a week, collaborating with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, our board of directors, the Pennsylvania FFA Foundation and many public service representatives, our team

is trying its best to maintain connections with people active in the agriculture industry.

Aside from just virtual opportunities, our team attended our first in-person event with members at the beginning of August.

We were required to wear masks as well as gloves for this event, but it was still a fulfilling opportunity to meet in person with members of our association.

We also met with AgChoice Farm Credit staff at their headquarters in Mechanicsburg. Our team was able to connect with their senior leadership team and find out more about our partnership with AgChoice. Members of our team were invited to tour Brubaker Farms in Mount Joy as well.

We all might prefer meetings in person, but we understand that this is not always possible. In an effort to connect with chapter officers throughout Pennsylvania, our team has been calling officers on the phone to see how they are doing. This year is so valuable to us as state officers, but it is ultimately about the members of Pennsylvania FFA. By calling these chapter officers, we are checking in, connecting with them and simply expressing that we are here for them. As hard as this year is for us, it is even harder for our agricultural education students.

What this year holds is unknown, but I know that our team is not here by mistake. This year is not what it is by chance. We are meant to be the authors of this book, this year.

We have two different ways we can look at those gold-embroidered numbers on our jackets. We can choose to feel defeated and wallow in disappointment, or we can choose to let this year be more than our circumstances; together, we are challenged to rise above.

2020-2021 is a year that will go down in history. A year that has had its trials, victories, tears and joys already ... but it is also a year each of my team members will remember for a lifetime. This year is going to be much more than any of us could imagine because God is still in control, and he is working in this season.

Our team has started writing our chapter — one that is very different from all the rest, but one that is unique to this team. As we continue to adapt to the challenges this year brings, I am holding on to hope that there is more to that gold lettering than just 2020 ... there is 2021.

We have chapters to write, pages to fill, memories to make and a year that is just getting started.

Pennsylvania FFA Foundation Announces New Giving Campaign

EAST BERLIN, Pa. — The Pennsylvania FFA Foundation is launching a new charitable campaign as a way to help support FFA members and fund the advancement of middle and high school agriculture education classrooms and across the commonwealth.

The Corduroy Club was established to recognize individuals who have committed to helping to develop future leaders in agriculture by recognizing their financial support of the Pennsylvania FFA.

The new program allows individuals to make recurring monthly gifts via a credit or debit card. Gift amounts start as little as \$10 per month.

"The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on our fundraising efforts this year, including the cancellation of Ag Progress Days, a large funding opportunity for us. We already know our largest fundraising event for

2021, the Pennsylvania Farm Show, is no longer an option for us as it has transitioned to a virtual event," said Caleb Wright, president of the Pennsylvania FFA Foundation board of trustees. "However, we need to remain ever diligent in creating opportunities for our youth in agricultural education classrooms and the FFA as we prepare leaders to one day feed a population that will exceed 9 billion by 2050."

The Pennsylvania FFA Foundation gives nearly \$300,000 annually to Pennsylvania FFA, including \$33,000 last school year to local chapters, members and ag education programs. To learn more about how you can support the Pennsylvania FFA Foundation's programs, including the Corduroy Club, contact Sarah Sparks, executive director, at 717-781-5780 or ssparks@paffafoundation.org or visit paffa.org/ways-to-give.