



BLUE & GOLD NEWS

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

www.paffa.org



State Officer Team Announces Its Theme

Pennsylvania FFA State Officers

As we began our training as a team, we threw out ideas of what our theme should be. Our idea wall started with over 50 thoughts — and then ended up blank. With many late nights and long conversations, our team decided on a single theme on Friday, July 9.

As we wrestled with many different ideas, each of the officers kept resorting back to two — a stance of unity, as well as the opportunity for members to show their individuality and creativity, and express

themselves. With all of that being considered we landed on this year's state theme — "Embrace."

This year, the Pennsylvania state officers are excited to embrace the opportunity to be back together with members and seek fulfillment in every moment of this journey because with the pandemic, it's hard not to enjoy these valuable moments. But this year, we will continue to embrace any adversity and challenge as it arises. We will also continue to embrace diversity, unity and inclusion in our organization and beyond.



Pennsylvania FFA photo

From left are Ravyn Bashore, sentinel; Nina Coolidge, secretary; Trevor Maxwell, reporter; Greg Gipe, vice president; Jordan Anderson, chaplain; Abigail O'Neill, president; and Molly Cessna, treasurer.

My Journey as a Leader

FROM THE OFFICERS STATION

I have always been told what this year would be like — "you travel, meet members, travel some more, meet more people, and go home. Then do it all again. It's so much fun and a once-in-a-lifetime experience."



TREVOR MAXWELL

Every single time I heard those words, I got butterflies in my stomach ... to the point I thought I was going to be sick out of excitement. Wearing an association jacket was always my dream since I joined my first agriculture class. But I never knew I could.

Since a young age, I have loved animals. That's where it all started. I wanted to show every animal I saw, pet them, and quite frankly, own them. When I was 8 years old, I got introduced to 4-H, where I showed market animals and continued into high school, when I joined my local FFA chapter.

I joined in my eighth-grade year as an "intro to agriculture" student. I hoped this class would change my life, but I didn't think it would go this far.

I made new friends, people I would have never talked to before. I became a chapter officer, made great connections with my advisers, and gained a huge support system. And I became an inspiration to others.

I recall the very words my advisor said to me that changed my perspective. We were heading out to an event where I would be wearing official dress along with members. Before everyone arrived, she said, "Our members really look up to you, even the older ones."

From then on, I knew I wanted to make a difference in other members' lives. And the best way for me to do that was to be the person they looked up to and feel comfortable as a leader.

I worked day in and day out making this happen. Spent hours preparing, learning and practicing. Every free minute was used to expand my knowledge on agriculture.

And here I am.

This is my dream, sitting here writing this article and inspiring others. My message is this: Aim to reach above and beyond, strive for success, and embrace your future. Problems and solutions may come before you in your travels that you have no control over, but you can control your ending point. And you know what you believe in. For me, I believe in the future of agriculture.

Editor's note: Trevor Maxwell is the Pennsylvania FFA state reporter.

State Officers Reflect on Embracing the Year

The Pennsylvania FFA state officers have selected the theme of "Embrace" for their year's mission. Together, they hope to encourage members to embrace the joy, challenges and opportunities that lay ahead in the future.

"Acceptance is the ability to allow people or situations to be what they were meant to be. Even if you do not agree, always accept it. Everyone and everything is different, and that is what makes us unique. Never change for anyone; be who you were meant to be. Embrace acceptance of others that are different from you."

— Ravyn Bashore, sentinel

"When faced with difficult decisions in life, we can make one of two choices. We can either forget everything and run, or we can face everything and rise. We might be faced with an overwhelming amount of fear in a difficult moment, but it is when we step outside of our comfort zone and challenge ourselves that we grow. Embrace the challenge."

— Nina Coolidge, secretary

"Not everyone knows each other's story, life or personality. Be the one to step outside of your comfort zone and welcome someone new into your life. Provide the opportunity for others to feel included and give them a purpose. Embrace inclusion. You never know when someone is having a bad day, and a simple conversation could change their life."

— Trevor Maxwell, reporter

"In the last year and a half, we have become all too familiar with the term 'unprecedented times.' Things may be looking up now; the pandemic is still a battle we are all fighting every day, and each opportunity to be together is so precious. This year I am looking forward to embracing every moment and truly being present during this remarkable year. I hope to soak in every second of this experience and be able to say at the end of it all, that I embraced the now."

— Abigail O'Neill, president

"I personally would encourage members to embrace their 'why' this year. Knowing your roots and passion will keep you grounded and focused. Always know your 'why' because new experiences are not always easy, but knowing your 'why' will remind you of what got you there and your purpose. Your 'why' will get you places you never dreamed possible."

— Greg Gipe, vice president

"Every August for the past 13 years I was always playing soccer and getting ready to start a new year of school. This August looks very different for me with no soccer and no school to start. This isn't a bad thing; it is just a big change for me. I have started a new journey in my life that is full of new experiences. Many people this August are going to experience a new change in their life, whether it is starting high school or college. It might also be starting a new job or moving across the country. This next year is going to be full of changes for my teammates and I, and I will Embrace the Change."

— Molly Cessna, treasurer

"I wish for all members to see the best in each day. Let us embrace hope for the coming year. The hope of new opportunities and possibilities. Hope is a focus, not a feeling. If we continue to focus on the hope we have for what is to come, we will find ourselves satisfied with what's in front of us instead of longing for what we've missed out on."

— Jordan Anderson, chaplain

FFA Member Balances 9 Animal Production Experiences

TREVOR MAXWELL

State Reporter

This month Pennsylvania FFA is highlighting Natasha Maddox, a member of Grand Canyon FFA in Tioga County.

During her three years at Wellsboro Area High School, Maddox has served as Grand Canyon's secretary. She also keeps a record of her nine supervised agricultural experiences.

Most notably, Maddox raises and cares for pigeons in her family's business. Her grandparents began the project in 2013 and encouraged Maddox to take part in the project about four years ago.

Since then, she has taken a great deal of responsibility in the pigeons' care including watering, feeding, providing supplements, and even overseeing parts of the breeding process.

Maddox's animal care and production endeavors do not stop with her pigeons. Her other experiences include sheep, goats, meat chickens and steers. She also has projects with rabbits, turkeys, feeder pigs and Wreaths Across America.

Of all her animal SAEs, Maddox prefers working with

her velveteen-eared bunnies because they were her first SAE project. With her FFA, she recently earned best of breed with Cadbury and Baxter, her two FFA rabbits. Recalling her showing experiences, Maddox says, "These opportunities are good for me and great to learn from."

Maddox will continue learning from these opportunities as she plans to continue her showing journey in Tioga County with hopes of showing at the Pennsylvania Farm Show.

She has attended many events during her FFA career in addition to her involvement with SAE. Some of her favorite parts of being a member of FFA include the Agricultural Cooperation Establishes Success conference, state convention, travel and competition.

"I love FFA because of the wide variety of opportunities that it provides for both students and the community," she said.

Beyond the blue jacket, her career plans are not fully decided, but she hopes to become either a large animal veterinarian or an agriculture educator.



Pennsylvania FFA photo

Natasha Maddox is an FFA member of the Grand Canyon FFA. She currently has nine FFA SAE projects, but her rabbits Cadbury and Baxter are her favorite.