



# BLUE & GOLD NEWS

## Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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## FFA Chapter Recycles Crayons to Save the Environment

**NINA COOLIDGE**

*Pennsylvania FFA State Secretary*

Tyrone High School students are reducing colorful waste in their local landfills.

FFA members and students in the school's agricultural science class learned that 120,000 pounds of crayons go into landfills each year. The class recognized the harmful impact the crayons are having on the ecosystem.

The class set a goal to help the environment by creating a crazy crayon committee that will reduce, reuse, and recycle the number of crayons that end up in landfills every year.

To do so, the students started brainstorming ideas on reducing the number of crayons that go into a landfill each year. That is when the idea to collect crayons came into play. Right away, the students got to work creating collection boxes and promotional materials to help spread awareness of their project through their school and community.

The students quickly realized that to meet their goal by April, they would need to collect over 2,000 pounds of crayons to melt down to recycle into candles. With the help of their ag teacher, Mrs. Tiffany Hoy, the students applied and received a grant for special



equipment to break down crayons into colorful candles.

The recycled crayon candles will be used in various chapter activities such as their annual school Halloween event, parades, Farm City Day Celebration, and elementary school presentations.

Not only are the students reducing, reusing and recycling the crayons, but they are taking their knowledge outside of the classroom.

This year, three students will be conducting an Agri-Science Fair project involving crayons' impact on the environment and paraffin alternative uses. Students will also set up a tent at a community safety day event, demonstrating how crayons can be recycled.

It is always amazing when students take what they learn in their agricultural education class and use their knowledge to better the environment.



Photo provided by the Pennsylvania FFA

Students and members of the Lewisburg High School get hands-on experience with American eels, a protected wildlife species native to Pennsylvania waterways.

## Chapter Hosts Watershed Moment For Students

**GREG GIPE**

*Pennsylvania FFA State Vice President and*

**TREVOR MAXWELL**

*Pennsylvania FFA State Reporter*

We discovered that the Lewisburg FFA chapter helped release several eels into the Susquehanna watershed, which piqued our interest. Questions about eels in Pennsylvania led us to seek answers.

Lewisburg FFA chapter adviser Van Wagner, who also teaches natural resources, heard about the eels some five years ago at the Union County school. He said he learned of efforts by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission to restore eels to the Susquehanna River watershed.

The fish can't migrate naturally from their breeding grounds in the Sargasso Sea off the Carolinas because of the Shamokin Dam. The American eel is a federally protected species; it had been abundant in the rivers in the Mid-Atlantic region before being depopulated.

Wagner would soon meet Pam Shellenberger of the USFWS, who helped connect him with individuals

who could help get him and his classroom involved. "At the time, no public schools were involved with the eel efforts," said Wagner.

They next decided to try an idea from Aaron Henning of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission. Henning suggested they try to catch young eels in the lower Susquehanna as they have been doing for years, but instead of just driving them north of the watershed to be released, they deliver the eels to the Lewisburg FFA chapter.

The eels are kept in special fish tanks in the classroom under the care and supervision of Wagner and his students. By caring for the eels, students gain hands-on experiences, learn primary care handling techniques, and study them for the school year. After the school year is over, the students will release the fish into their local streams to help keep the population in order.

"The most exciting part for me is seeing the 150-plus students in my classroom every year getting first-hand experiences with eels," said Wagner. "I get to see a younger generation get excited about wildlife restoration in our local creeks and rivers."

## Growing Outside Your Comfort Zone

**FROM THE OFFICERS STATION**



**NINA COOLIDGE**  
*STATE SECRETARY*

Growing up in a small town provided me with a level of comfort. From driving past the same old courthouse, my childhood park, and my favorite restaurant, I knew every inch of my town, and I knew just about everybody I walked by on the main street.

Living in a small town also meant all my friends were within 30 minutes or less of my house. But all of a sudden, my comfort zone of living in a small

town disappeared when I went off to college.

On Aug. 20, 2020, I moved to a new town and into my college dormitory. I was away from my familiar streets, restaurants, and most importantly, my friends and family. I had hit the reset button on life.

I explored the campus and the downtown area for the first week, but I kept to myself. The small-town girl in me told me to stay in my comfort zone and not venture too far off the beaten path. I was too scared to reach out to new people in fear that they would judge me or not want to be my friend.

When classes started up, I interacted with my classmates and talked to new people. And then, little by little, class by class, I started to connect with my classmates. One day, I decided to take a giant step in breaking out of my comfort zone. I invited a classmate to grab lunch with me after class. Much to my surprise, she said yes, and we had a good time talking about our lives growing up over a delicious meal.

Soon, my classmate and I discovered that we were pretty similar, and that is when a beautiful friendship blossomed. That moment was the tipping point for me during my first year of college.

I realized that when I believed in myself and had the confidence and courage to step outside my comfort zone, I could take on the world. So I started joining clubs, making more friends, and even going way outside my comfort zone by tutoring.

By deciding to step outside of my comfort zone, I started to grow and realize my true passions in life. As Neale Donald Walsch once said, "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone."

As an officer, I have been in positions where I've had to step outside my comfort zone. Yet, when I took those leaps of faith, I developed into a better person and leader who can encourage and enable the FFA members I serve.

I encourage you all to embrace living outside of your comfort zone.



Tyrone FFA Photos

Members of Tyrone Area FFA chapter are collecting donations of used crayons to recycle into candles. The members hope to reduce crayon waste in local landfills.

## Embrace Your Life Passions

**ABIGAIL O'NEILL**

*Pennsylvania FFA State President*

This month, Pennsylvania FFA is excited to embrace our passions. From agriculture literacy to community outreach, each blue jacket holds the opportunity to seek out our powers and share them with the world.

This month, look around in your life for the things you are passionate about and share them with others. We look forward to hearing you share your passions with us this month.