



BLUE & GOLD NEWS

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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Officer Reflections From a Year in Service

Finishing out their last month in office, the Pennsylvania FFA state officers took time to reflect on their year in service to the agricultural organization.



Submitted photos

**James Winklosky
President**

Reflecting back on my year as a state officer, I have seen the members achieve so much while showing me the importance of being in the moment through their passion that fills a room.

Looking back, one of my favorite memories was Mid-Winter Convention, seeing all the new members receive their jackets and the older members receive their Keystone degrees. It has always made me feel like it's a passing of the torch, the new and old.

So as the year ends, I need to think of the future. My plans are to go to Pennsylvania College of Technology for diesel technology. I will be an intern at Cleveland Brothers in hopes of working for them after college.

I have one final message for the members: Always appreciate what life has given you and be in the moment because life will move before your eyes. Just take a step back every so often and look at what is happening and just look before everything is gone.

Because the future depends on you.

You decide what your future holds. Never downgrade yourself, and don't listen to the haters because you can achieve anything you put your mind to.

Pennsylvania, thank you for giving me a year of service I will never forget. I hope I have helped you as much as you helped me this year.

Thank you.



**Benjamin Torrey
Vice President**

Over the last year, I have had the distinct duty of serving the Pennsylvania FFA as the 2022-2023 state vice president. This year has been nothing short of a novel-worthy adventure.

From all the laughs and stories told to the many miles driven and endless experiences, the memories we made this year will stick with me forever.

I never thought that five people I barely knew could become like family to me in such a short time. I am forever grateful for my teammates and for our executive director, Mr. Brammer.

You all have allowed me to grow and develop into a better person over these last 12 months.

There are endless experiences I could talk about, but I would like to highlight a few. Right from the beginning, training weeks were a blast. Getting to learn about myself and my teammates was an inspiring experience.

I will never forget all the fun we had visiting well over 100 of our very own chapters and schools. The interactions we had with the members will be something to remember forever.

Following state office, I plan on attending Penn State University to double major in agricultural and Extension education as well as political science with hopes of either teaching agricultural mechanics or advocating for agriculture on a higher level. I also would like to stay involved with my family's multigeneration farm.

To those candidates running for these positions, I wish you the best of luck. I know that each and every one of you is incredible and capable of going wherever your heart desires.

To the seven who will be chosen to serve, I say welcome. May your year be filled with joy, adventure, prosperity and memories.

Put in the work and your year will shape you into the best that you can be.

Thank you again to everyone who made this year one to remember.



**Grace Benton
Secretary**

With only eight days left of being a state officer, looking back to one year ago, it's crazy how much time flies. I have been more than blessed to serve as secretary this year.

I feel grateful for the relationships I have made with members and for the experiences I've had, like volunteering at the governor's inauguration, getting to see the projects students are working on at chapter visits, and listening to seniors talk about how FFA impacted them at their final banquets.

The members I have listened to and the accomplishments I have seen these members make have inspired me for the future of agriculture. I have considered myself lucky to have had the experiences I did the past year.

As this chapter is coming to a close for me, I am excited to open a new one as I head off to the University of Kentucky to study agricultural engineering.



**Callie Whiting
Treasurer**

This year has been a blessing. I got to travel, meet the best people and work with an amazing team, but most importantly, I grew as an individual. I learned so much about my strengths but more about my weaknesses, and I am very thankful.

No one prepared me for how much I'd grow this year. Pennsylvania FFA has opened my eyes to so much more.

I got to meet the most amazing members across our state. They welcomed me into their home chapters with open arms, and I will forever be grateful. More importantly, they showed me how to be confident and proud of myself.

I wanted to share my story this

year, and our members listened. I made the deepest connections with people from the opposite side of the state based on just my story.

This year, I struggled with mental health problems. But our members each helped me grow through my mental health journey, trusting me to serve the best I can and to stay true to myself.

They were always there when I needed them the most, and they didn't even know it. I will always be indebted to them and all they did for me.

I have grown a love for our state and the communities across Pennsylvania. I know that no matter where I go, I will be able to find a place to call home.

Working with other states across the country, I have learned that Pennsylvania is so strong and unique. I couldn't have asked to serve a different state or any other members.

Finally, to my team, I never knew five strangers would turn into family in just one year. My teammates will do great things in the future, and they deserve the world.

They are the most unique individuals, and I couldn't have asked to serve our association with anyone else. This is one of the hardest good-byes, but I know my team and I have served to the best of our abilities.

Pennsylvania FFA, thank you all for being kindhearted and welcoming. Love, your 2022-2023 state treasurer, Callie Whiting.



**Jeremy Rose
Reporter**

This year, serving as the reporter of the Pennsylvania FFA has been a great honor, and I'll forever be thankful for the opportunities my team and I were given. I loved every minute of every little opportunity.

From chapter visits to banquets to all of the travels throughout our year, it was the best year of my life. This year, I have reflected on all of my experiences as a chapter member of the Penns Manor FFA in Indiana County.

I was able to grow as a chapter member, then as a state officer, and I'm excited to continue to grow as an individual at Penn State this upcoming fall. This fall, I'll return in my sophomore year at Penn State, where I'll be studying agricultural education with a minor in global agriculture.

My future plans include teaching high school students about agriculture. I knew I wanted to teach as an agricultural educator prior to my year as a state officer, but after my year of

service, I learned that I want to teach for bigger and better reasons.

I also intend on giving back to both the 4-H and FFA programs throughout the state to show my appreciation for everything those programs did for me. It has been a pleasure serving the Pennsylvania FFA.

I'm excited to serve the FFA as an alumni member, and I look forward to seeing the next reporter of the Pennsylvania FFA.



**Zaleigh Wade
Chaplain**

At the beginning of my state officer year, I told the story of the personal conflict that I had when being elected as the state chaplain. The dread that lingered in me trying to figure out how to serve in a position that interfered with my personal religious beliefs.

The first half of my year went pretty smoothly. "This will not be as hard as I thought," I remember thinking. However, the Farm Show was a turning point in my year.

I was asked to give multiple reflections that week, but one day, I started to get comments from strangers. I found myself getting criticized for giving a reflection instead of giving an actual prayer.

"You should not be ashamed of your beliefs, and you should stand strong in them no matter what," I thought.

I brushed these comments off quickly, but I was never the same after. The person I was before becoming a state officer was strong in her beliefs and opinions; nothing could shake them.

However, during my time serving as a state officer, I found myself becoming soft in my beliefs, turning away from my values to become inclusive to others. This moment at Farm Show sent me into a spiral because I realized that I lost who I was.

I found, after this, it was harder to give reflections or even prayers, so I was determined to stand firm in my beliefs again. I faced a ton of criticism when I chose to go against the grain, but without even realizing it, my actions were inspiring members in their own faith.

Being elected as the state chaplain, I expected to be an unnecessary position, no real purpose. Yet the highlight of my whole year was from the support that I gave and then received from the members of Pennsylvania FFA when I would speak of my faith and do what my job was as the chaplain — to provide spiritual guidance to those who were seeking direction.