



BLUE & GOLD NEWS

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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For Such a Time as This

FROM THE OFFICER’S CORNER



CRYSTAL BOMGARDNER
PRESIDENT

I recently had a college professor ask where I would be right now if that one change that altered the course of my life didn’t happen. I thought I could be in many different places. I looked back and thought, “What if I never took that leap of faith? What if that situation didn’t happen?” Then I thought back to what if I never had the opportunity to zip up my association jacket? What if that defining moment that I chose to run for state office never happened? What if all those moments and changes that led up to that moment never happened?

But I am so grateful it did. The words that I am reminded of constantly as a state officer are taken from Esther 4:14: “For such a time as this.” In whatever season I am walking through, I walk knowing that my Lord Jesus has ordained me for this moment and this position. My year as a state officer has been filled with meeting so many people, creating relationships, and building upon the relationships I already had. But the most amazing experience of all is getting to see every person I come into contact with fulfilling their moments in whatever role they are in. Most of them don’t realize the impact they create just by saying yes to the call on their lives. Pennsylvania FFA members, community members and members of our beloved agricultural industry, don’t forget that in whatever season you are living in, you have the opportunity to leave your mark and impact the people around you. You have the opportunity to change the future in a positive light, creating a chain reaction of positive young people who are willing to work to make our agricultural industry and world that much more effective and efficient.

Tractor Project Crosses Generations

Northeast Bradford FFA
Adam Keir’s tractor was originally his great-grandfather’s. The 1941 Farmall M has been on his property since the early ’40s. In that time, it has been passed down through the family. When Keir received the tractor, it had not run in over a decade and had not been used regularly in over 30 years. It sat in the field most of its life until the Northeast Bradford FFA chapter decided to restore a tractor for the Pennsylvania Farm Show this year. “I had mentioned to my students that I had an opening for a tractor restoration. Without hesitation, Adam brought the tractor to school the next day, so we went with it,” adviser Robert Robbins said. “It did not run, move or do anything when it was brought to the school. It was in bad condition. “I have worked closely with Adam the entire time, teaching him and showing him how to do things. He has taken that and run with it. I have seen Adam go from having very minimal knowledge of mechanical

systems to having a very broad knowledge and understanding. He has been severely discouraged at times but never gives up,” Robbins said. “He knows how to get things done and understands that not everything goes how you would expect it to go. “He has had his hands on every single part of the tractor (including the engine and transmission internals) and understands what each part does and the ‘how and why’ behind it. He is so familiar with this machine that I can show him a bolt, and he can tell me where on the tractor it came from. “Adam has taken firm command of his project now that he has confidence and experience. He regularly enlists people to help him, giving them clear, concise and relevant instruction.” The project started Nov. 2, 2022. Since then, hundreds of hours of work have been put into it. Students came in on evenings, weekends and even holidays to push it over the finish line. It was not simply a tune-up and repaint. It was a comprehensive tearing down and rebuilding of the machine. The engine block was replaced,

and the engine was rebuilt on a motor stand in the classroom. The original engine block had a massive crack in the casting of cylinder No. 3, so the students were forced to get a new block. The transmission was rebuilt by disassembling, repairing and inspecting or replacing each and every gear, bearing and component. The FFA members went all out — so much so that every single bolt was removed from the tractor to be cleaned, prepped and painted. Every bit of rust, grease, grime or dirt on the tractor was removed. All bolts that needed to be replaced were put on the lathe, and the International “dot top” was replicated. “This has been a very rewarding project as an adviser for a multitude of reasons. I think the tractor has been essential in drawing students to our program, which has doubled in numbers over the past two to three years,” Robbins said. “Seeing the growth of my students and seeing them take an active role in a project that isn’t necessarily their own has been really nice to see.”

Bees in the Classroom

Honey bees inside the classroom? This is a sight that is a bit hard to believe without seeing.

But it’s every day for the Juniata Valley FFA chapter. At Juniata Valley, cool experi-

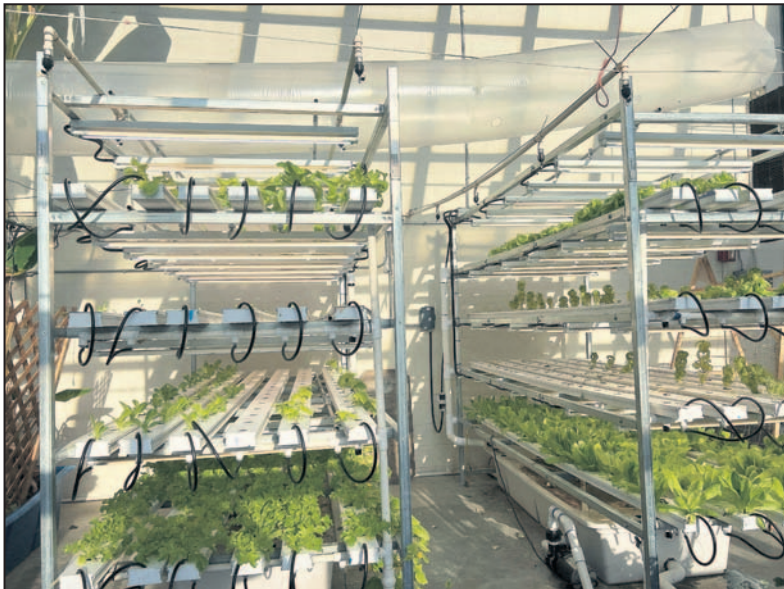


Submitted
Juniata Valley FFA’s movable shelves allow for bee observation and management.

ences last a lifetime. One of those is the honey bees. Moving shelf cases of bees hang on the wall of the ag teacher’s classroom. There are over two columns of honey bee case slots. This provides students with a visualization of what honey bees do in their homes and the honeycomb that they make. The honey is used for a variety of different purposes after collection. Some is entered into the local county fair. Some is used for taste testing. Some is also added to tea and put on a variety of different snacks. Tours are offered to elementary students in kindergarten and fifth grade in conjunction with their pollinator lessons and units on honeybees. And tours also include taste testing. It is great for students to be able to get up close and personal with the bees without fear of getting stung. An EpiPen is kept in the classroom in case of an emergency, but the entrance for the bees is secured behind a fence to avoid interaction with students. The bees have access to the outside through a tube and have the opportunity to pollinate and gather nectar and pollen in the school community. Sugar water is also offered during the winter and, as needed, for summer.

Classroom to Cafeteria Tray

The Mason Dixon FFA has a unique connection right back to its own school. Through their aquaponics system, chapter members grow lettuce that they eat every day in the school cafeteria. The chapter offers numerous aquaponics classes to students, allowing hands-on experience of growing and harvesting their own crops. The lettuce grown is donated to the community, cafeteria and district staff. Students get a chance to learn about growing and harvesting of produce crops in a unique soil-less setting. Students also appreciate the “farm-to-table” aspect of the system. It has also been utilized for research SAE projects. The district’s elementary schools take annual trips to the high school to learn about the fish and the nitrogen cycle in aquaponics. The system has the capability to grow 720 heads of lettuce in the gutter part of the system. Along with the lettuce, students grow kale, tomatoes, cucumbers, zucchini, a variety of herbs and, the students’ favorite, bananas. Each year the bananas are harvested for banana bread and muffins.



Submitted
The Mason Dixon FFA aquaponics system can grow 720 heads of lettuce.