



BLUE & GOLD NEWS

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings



Embracing the Opportunities of Agriculture

OFFICER CORNER



EMILY KERSTETTER
STATE TREASURER

The opportunity was presented to me to meet with the people who make it possible for me to serve Pennsylvania FFA.

My teammates and I were blessed to visit with Lancaster Farming, PennAg Industries Association, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Horizon Farm Credit, Cargill in Camp Hill, Knouse Foods and Ag Com Inc.

As we met with these dedicated supporters there were some commonalities: their connection to agriculture, the employees’ passion for their jobs, and the community within the workplace.

Every person that I met exhibited fellowship and unity.

The importance of togetherness was apparent, and they prided themselves on what they could do together.

Our experience was inclusive, caring, supportive and full of advice.

I have always prided myself on my preparedness and knowing what comes next.

During these visits we heard

many stories of how “our paths may not be set in stone” and that “sometimes we need to find our purpose as we go.”

Many of the industry professionals that I spoke with had a different plan in mind when going to and graduating from college as compared to where they currently are.

I have known for a long time that I have wanted to pursue agriculture education and teach agriculture in the classroom.

I found out that a lot of the industry professionals that I look up to have agriculture education degrees as well.

The passion that I have seen in each individual is inspiring but

striking. I find myself back in the shoes that I was in during high school; someone asked me what my future plans were, and there were so many directions that I wanted to follow.

Although these extraordinary experiences left me confused, there are a few things that are clear to me.

As long as you are in the industry, trust that the people around you will be passionate too.

There is no need to worry about where you will land. Instead focus on putting in the work to take the leap of faith.

Emily Kerstetter is the Pennsylvania FFA state treasurer.



Pa. FFA Association

The Pennsylvania FFA state officers stand with Aaron Humes, the general manager of the Cargill processing plant in Camp Hill, Pa., in late summer 2024. From left, Humes, Nathan Lesh, Sydney Albright, Evan Espenshade, Chloe Bomgardner, Emily Kerstetter, Jaclyn Martin and Kennady Laird.

Meet the National Officer Candidate

CHLOE BOMGARDNER
Pennsylvania FFA President

“Be intentional!” These words from Crystal Bomgardner are what inspire others across the state.

But what about beyond the borders of the commonwealth?

Being just days away from the National FFA Convention, the team thought it would be the best time to introduce to you the 2024 national officer candidate.

Crystal Bomgardner, the 20-year-old daughter of Corwin and Tara Bomgardner of Jonestown, is representing Pennsylvania FFA as its national officer candidate at the 97th National FFA Convention this October.

To become Pennsylvania’s candidate, Crystal went through a process similar to that of the state officer selection process here in Pennsylvania, which Crystal is quite familiar with as she served as the 2023-24 Pennsylvania FFA state president.

Crystal presented a speech, interviewed, answered impromptu questions, and performed a stand-and-deliver segment in front of a nominating committee.

Being selected to represent Pennsylvania at the national level means



Crystal Bomgardner

she will be competing against 36 other candidates from across the country.

Crystal’s life motto — “Just do whatever comes down the pike because you never know when you’ll get the opportunity to do it again” — represents her leadership involvement well as she is a passionate leader driven by living for the benefit of others.

This is the main reason Crystal decided to run for national office. She wants to “inspire students, advisers and all other people to live in their purpose by redefining the word intentional.”

She wants to encourage everyone to be intentional, using the season of life they are in right now to make an impact.

“Go out of your way to do a random act of kindness for someone,” she said.

It is current and previous mentors who inspired Crystal to begin her agricultural leadership journey.

Linda Gilbert, a former director of Pennsylvania Dairy Princess & Promotion Services, is one of many mentors in Crystal’s life that have inspired her.

“I saw her influence in the lives of others and her impact on my life,” Gilbert said.

Crystal was inspired to extend her leadership in a new way by running for state office last year, even if that meant not being elected, which then turned into her goal of running for national office.

She plans to live out her purpose in whatever season she is living in.

Best of luck to Crystal as she represents Pennsylvania as a national officer candidate.

Crystal and Chloe Bomgardner are sisters.

State Officers Head Back to School

EVAN ESPENSHADE
Pennsylvania FFA Reporter

With students heading back to school, the Pennsylvania state FFA officer team has hit the road to kick off its first set of school chapter visits.

Chapter visits serve as a daylong training session to help members learn how to advance their FFA careers, the value of an intracurricular agricultural experience with school administration, and what is happening at each FFA chapter.

The first visits kicked off the week of Sept. 2 with stops at the Southern Huntingdon and Juniata Valley chapters.

The state officers develop workshops to teach students about the seven leadership skills, the importance of communication and other valuable life skills.

Southern Huntingdon chapter adviser Mikara Price appreciates the opportunity hosting a chapter visit provides her students.

It’s a fun day of learning and a chance for her students to interact with the state officer team.

The state officers made their first stop at Southern Huntingdon County High School on Sept. 4 to meet with Price and Carol Rudy.

Price has been teaching for three years.

“Becoming a teacher was not my original plan, but when the agriculture teacher position opened the week I graduated from Penn State, I eagerly jumped on the opportunity to prepare the next generation of agriculturalists and use my past experiences in the program as well as being a past state officer to make a difference,” Price said.



Evan Espenshade

Pennsylvania FFA Vice President Nathan Lesh presents on the power of positive thinking to students at Juniata Valley High School on Sept. 5.

Rudy has been teaching for two years at Southern Huntingdon. Her advice to her students is simple.

“Don’t be afraid to step outside of your comfort zone,” she said.

“Throughout my time in agricultural education, I have seen a tremendous amount of personal growth once I went all in.”

The team then traveled to Juniata Valley High School on Sept. 5 to visit with the members of the Blue Juniata FFA chapter.

The state officer team is looking forward to visiting schools through the rest of the year to spread the word about FFA.

For chapters that have not scheduled their chapter visit, have your advisers contact Mike Brammer at c-mbrammer@paffa.org.

Member Goes ‘Next Gen’ for Environmental Science

MORGAN BEAR
Chapter Adviser, Big Spring FFA

Elizabeth Eckenrode, a junior at Big Spring High School and a Big Spring FFA member, had the opportunity to attend the Next Gen FFA Conference focused on the environmental sciences and natural resource systems career pathway.

Among 75 participants, she was the only student selected from Pennsylvania to attend.

Throughout the conference in Utah, Lizzy was exposed to a variety of career opportunities and visited with business and industry professionals.

This is a great opportunity for students to explore their interests in the environmental field and hone their professional skills through workshops.

The conference included many different sessions including employability skills, career planning, and industry roundtable discussions.

Two tours were highlights of the conference.

One tour was to Antelope Island where park rangers and wildlife biologists gave students an inside look at management of the bison herd and the history of the island.

Another tour was to the Rio



Submitted

Elizabeth Eckenrode at the Next Gen FFA Conference in Utah.

Tinto Kennecott copper mine and headquarters, where students got hands-on experience learning how natural resources are extracted, and how both land regeneration and waste management are prioritized.

Overall, Lizzy had an amazing experience networking with so many students nationwide.

She is looking forward to applying her knowledge and experience gained through the National FFA Organization by attending a Next Gen FFA Conference in the future.