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Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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FFA Fun Fest Has Furry Friends

The Lancaster County Career and Technology Center FFA chapter hosted the seventh annual LCCTC FFA Fun Fair on Friday, May 17, at the Lancaster County Career and Technology Center. The LCCTC FFA’s Fun Fair was created by charter-year members to raise awareness of FFA and their class. The fair’s proceeds will benefit LCCTC student organizations.

All members are enrolled in the center’s animal production science and technology class and the students have been taking on the leadership roles to plan the activities and organize the event. The FFA had a free petting zoo featuring a variety of farm animals, which may include calves, sheep, alpacas, rabbits and others.

FFA members also held a blanket drive to collect new (store-bought) or newly handmade blankets to benefit children in hospitals, in support of Blankets4Zane.

A special raffle was also held in conjunction with the Pennsylvania FFA Foundation.

Tickets were sold for \$20 per ticket for a chance to win a 2019 Kubota Side-Kick RTV-XG850 or \$5,000 cash instead of the Kubota. Tickets can also be purchased online at <https://www.paffa.org/foundation/>; visit the website for more information. The winner of the Kubota raffle will notified on July 18 at the Pennsylvania FFA Foundation Golf Tournament; the winner does not need to be present to win.



FFA members make furry friends. From left, front, is Logan Garber of Elizabethtown and Mya Swift of Manheim Township; Back, Mary Jane Stauffer of Cocalico, Adrianna John of Garden Spot, Kayla Bretz of Elizabethtown, Abigail Chaffins of Elizabethtown, Erica Castetter of Pequea Valley/Lancaster Mennonite, Bryan Walton of Penn Manor, Brooke Fellenbaum of Garden Spot, Chloe Masters of Warwick, Maya Pieters of Lampeter-Strasburg, and Jade Gillenwater of Pequea Valley.

State Officer Advice For Candidates

With the deadline of May 1 having come and gone, applications for Pennsylvania State FFA Office have officially closed. We here at Pennsylvania FFA wish the best of luck to all candidates, and also to all of the students competing in career development and leadership development events.

The state officer team has put together a list of thoughts and reflections on their own experiences running for state office, and wanted to share them with our members, and those prospective candidates as well.

Why Did You Decide to Run for State Office?

“The decision to run for a state officer position is a hard one because of everything that you have to put on hold for one year. I ran for a state office to give back to the organization that provided so much guidance to me as a high school student. FFA is an organization that allows students to step outside their comfort zones and grow into a person that is ready to fill the shoes of previous generations and serving organization like FFA is an honor.” —Roarke Miller

What was Something About Running for State Office that Surprised You?

“While running for a state office,



This year’s retiring state FFA officer team gives advice from their personal experiences to help prepare officer applicants for the interview process and the role of state officer.

I surprised myself. As Jake mentions, the rigor and intensity of the interview preparation and process challenges you to be honest with yourself, realize your strengths and weaknesses, and maintain the constant drive of why you started this journey. This process cannot compare to anything I had ever been through as a recent high school graduate. This process pushed, pulled, and stretched me to my maximum. This process helped me become realistic

with what I could and could not handle, alone. Even through the thick of it all, I completed the last round of interviews. I surprised myself by being able to dive head first into this journey and throw myself further than I had ever gone before. I challenged myself to grow and learn in brand new ways. I surprised myself by conquering the process of running for a state office. You are about to embark on a journey of a lifetime, develop such skills and knowledge

as you can secure, and you too will conquer the process of running for a state office.” — Jenna Harnish

Do You Believe that Running for State Office Improved your Professional Skills?

“I believe that running for state office greatly improved my professional skills! The rigor and intensity of the interview process is something that I feel will help me prepare for any job interview in the future. Also, the preparation I did beforehand helped me learn to relax when trying to present myself in a professional manner. If you are prepared before the interview, your confidence will be much greater!” — Jake Kinzer

If You Could Give One Piece of Advice to Someone Running for State Office, What Would it Be?

- “If I were to give one piece of advice to someone running for office it would be to simply just be yourself. The nominating committee is looking for seven different people that can come together to be a team, not seven of the same people. Be yourself, put it all out there, and you can’t regret anything.” —Morgan Bear
- “First relax. Be yourself, come prepared and confident for the process. Be aware of your strengths and weaknesses — have confidence

that you can succeed. Don’t compare yourself to the other candidates — you each bring different strengths and perspectives to the agricultural industry. Know that each of you allows the industry to grow and prosper. Your passion for agriculture and willingness to serve will allow you to lead and inspire. State office isn’t about promoting yourself, it’s about bettering our organization.” — Milena Bashore

What is Your Favorite Memory From Running for State Office?

- “My favorite memory from running for state office was being able to meet so many new people and grow through the experience together. Everyone running for state office is so passionate about the National FFA Organization, so it is a great opportunity to connect with others from around the state. No matter what the outcome, individuals have the ability to learn, grow, and develop their leadership and public speaking skills.” — Abby Yoder
- “Since I got to run twice, I also got to meet two completely different sets of candidates, and it was fun seeing how different each group was from the other and getting to meet an entire new batch of people the second time around.” — Sam Loy



The state officer, got an up-close look of a mushroom bed in a house during the tour.

State Officer Team Visits Mushroom Businesses

The Pennsylvania FFA officer team spent a day learning about one of Pennsylvania’s top agricultural commodities, mushrooms. The day started off with meeting at the American Mushroom Institute and learning about mushroom production in Pennsylvania before going out to some of the mushroom farms.

The first stop was at a manure processing facility. At this farm they took manure and processed it into the soil for the mushrooms to begin growing. They also grew a few different kinds of mushrooms. The state officer team learned how many different parts there are in processing manure from when they receive it all the way to spreading it into the beds as compost, where the mushrooms begin to grow. Officers were also amazed at how quickly the mushrooms grew, and that the mushroom soil itself needed replaced somewhat regularly. Observing the organic side of mushroom farming was also interesting, seeing how mushrooms aren’t grown like other traditional crops, and how this allows them to be easily processed as an organic product was cool to learn, especially with the current push for organic products nationwide.

The second mushroom farm the team went to was a slightly larger mushroom growing operation. Here they viewed similar production methods of multiple different kinds of mushrooms, such as white caps, portabellas, and many different kinds of oysters. Something that really stood out to the team was the multiple ways mushrooms could be prepared

and cooked, as many of us had only had experience with white cap and portabella mushrooms. Seeing the way that certain mushrooms grew in climate-controlled “fog rooms” was fascinating.

Seeing the mushroom cycle come full circle, the team visited a mushroom processing facility that provided bulk orders of mushrooms for grocery store chains. We saw how mushrooms are sorted by shape and size, and how providing a mushroom that meets customer expectations is important, as consumers have a picture in their head of what their food should look like, and are less likely to make a purchase if those expectations are not met. This knowledge opened up a new light on our tours, as the team began to understand that since whitecaps are the most popular mushroom, there is a strict preconceived notion of how these mushrooms should look, and that mushrooms must grow accordingly in order to meet the consumers ideology.

It was also neat to see how different mushrooms grow compared to traditional crops in Pennsylvania. While on these production tours, the state officer team has seen many different ways of producing more traditional Pennsylvania crops, such as corn and apples. The tour was eye opening in seeing how a large industry like mushrooms can be completely different from growing anything else. Mushrooms are a unique item and it was exciting seeing their growing cycle from start to finish, since mushrooms are as unique and fun as they are widely used and loved.