



BLUE AND GOLD

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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Pennsylvania Represented at State Officer Summit

On July 22, the National FFA kicked off its first ever State Officer Summit, replacing the State Presidents Conference traditionally open to only two officers representing each state.

While there, the team participated in workshops and discussions facilitated by National FFA which taught them how to advocate for themselves, their communities and their states. Tours of Washington D.C. included stops at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington Monument, and even a tour of the Executive Office, just a short walk from the White House.

The team spent time on the hill, meeting with congressmen to advocate for House Bill 5595, an amendment to the National FFA charter which allows the National FFA Organization to become more of a self-governing body. Pennsylvania’s state officers were able to meet with U.S. Rep. Glenn Thompson who introduced the bill and has been a long-time supporter of Pennsylvania FFA.

During the end of the week, State President Jenna Harnish and Vice President Jacob Kinzer served as Pennsylvania’s representatives to the delegate session, a process that reviews the delegate issues that will be debated and voted upon at the National FFA convention in Indianapolis this October.



Submitted photo
The state officer team stops for a photo in front of the Capitol building as part of their time at the State Officer Summit.



Submitted photo
This year’s East Juniata FFA float placed second in the Fayette Carnival Parade.

Old Becomes New With Restoration Project

The East Juniata FFA chapter in McAlisterville, Pennsylvania, has begun a unique and interesting tradition by transforming an old, unusable manure spreader into a rustic and patriotic parade float. The manure spreader was originally brought in to teach an ag mechanics class how to weld but after some inspiration from the students the spreader quickly turned into an iconic float that the East Juniata FFA chapter is depended on to bring to the local parades.

The main theme for the parade float, “FFA in the USA,” is very apparent with strings of miniature flags draped over the sides, American flags standing in the back, and the students wearing red, white, and blue shirts. On the sides of the parade float agricultural quotes, FFA emblems and American flags, all hand carved with Dremel tools, are on full display to showcase the students’ hard work. The quotes on the side of the float are from great supporters of agriculture such as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, John F. Kennedy and Paul Harvey.

The National FFA theme from last year, “I Can, We Will” is captured on the front of the float and describes the sense of community found in the East Juniata FFA Chapter. The quote on the back of the float says “We Can, We Have for 90 Years,” and with projects like this, the chapter will continue to grow.

This year the East Juniata FFA chapter placed second in the Fayette Carnival Parade, and are looking to do several other parades in the upcoming year. This parade float is a fun and competitive way for the members of the chapter to showcase their talents and grow as a chapter through spreading the importance of the FFA and agricultural education.

The Last 60 Days

FROM THE OFFICERS STATION

For most members, the dream of one day becoming a state officer begins the moment they meet their first state officer. However, for very few of us, such as myself, that dream never exists. I always viewed state officers as just fellow members with “Association” on the back of their jackets.

I am humbled by the ability to have described myself as just your average high school FFA member. I had active supervised agricultural experience projects, competed in a variety of career development events, participated in community service, and held chapter and county level officer positions. Most of all, some of my greatest memories in high school can be found within the four walls of the agricultural education classroom of the Athens Area High School.

It was not until the last 60 days of my high school career that I began to reflect upon my time. Before I knew it, I would be not only an alumnus of the school district, but of the Athens FFA chapter. The moment when the diploma would finally reach my hands is when I would proudly begin my transition into the role of an active alumni member. I have always known in my heart that I truly desired to give back my time and resources to the organization which had impacted me greatly as it has helped me grow into the young woman I am today.

As the final stretch before graduation began, I vividly remember fellow chapter members beginning to approach and encourage me to make the decision to apply for a state office. My dedicated chapter advisers, David Steinfeldt and Sarabeth Royer, began to encourage me as well — “What is the worst that can happen, you continue on to Penn State University this fall?” I remember Mr. Steinfeldt telling me as if it was yesterday. Along with Ms. Royer and her ever-famous quote, “If it does not challenge you, it does not change you.”

With little confidence in myself to stand out in a crowd of 27 other highly deserving and dedicated candidates, I submitted my application to become a candidate for a state office.

As the next few weeks flew by, I began to prepare myself for the intense interview process, while always keeping the thought of having the ability to pull out of the running up until the first



JENNA HARNISH

day of Summer Activities Week. Before I had time to blink, that first day was here. As our chapter’s bus pulled up to Penn State campus I realized for myself why I wanted to be a state officer — I desire to give one year of my life giving back to the Pennsylvania FFA Association which has positively impacted me more than any other organization I have been apart of. Thus began three long days of FFA knowledge, speaking, one-on-one interviews, team building, and worrying about being one of the few who were not called back in for another round of interviews.

The final session of Summer Activities Week was upon us and so was the moment that the 2018-19 state officer team would be announced. All 28 state officer candidates gathered on the floor of the Bryce Jordan Center and the officer positions were called one by one; until there was only one position left. For a moment, my whole world stood still as I hung my head knowing my journey in the blue and gold jacket was about to end. “Jenna Harnish of the Athens FFA Chapter” — before I knew it I was running faster than I have since my track days alongside of the retiring president, Nathan Moyer. I climbed the steps of the large stage and ran into the arms of a random group of fellow members who were now my teammates. These fellow members would soon grow to become some of my dearest friends.

As I reflect upon the last sixty days of my time in office, I often find myself going back to the values I have learned growing up in the rural farming community of Bradford County. The goal for myself during the year is to take in the experiences and knowledge of a variety of proud Pennsylvania agricultural industries. The goal for my role is to understand the importance of “Association” on the back of my jacket as I provide continuous encouragement and support to each member.

If I did not have that support, I would not be blessed with the position I am in. If members do not have the encouragement, they will never be fully aware of all that they can accomplish — even if they do not know it yet.

Editor’s note: Jenna Harnish is the Pennsylvania state FFA president.