



BLUE & GOLD NEWS

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings

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Stationed by the Keystone

ZALEIGH WADE
Pennsylvania FFA Chaplain

The time getting prepared for my interview process for a position as a state officer was an exciting time for my family and friends.

They were supportive in the process but they were very curious and had many questions. The most common question that everyone wanted answered was “What officer position do you want?”

My answer to that was simple: “I will be happy to serve in any position, except for the chaplain.”

For those who know me personally, this was a shock to hear. My life was focused around church; why would I not want to serve as chaplain? I already served as my chapter’s chaplain; why would I not want to serve as the state chaplain?

I then explained my reasoning: “Over the years the state chaplain position was changed to become more inclusive to FFA members with varieties of religious backgrounds, so they no longer say

invocations that are based on Christianity. Although I understand why we made these changes, and I respect other members’ religious backgrounds, when I say an invocation and cannot say amen or refer to God, that conflicts with my personal religious beliefs.”

For these reasons, I respectfully did not want to serve as the state chaplain.

However, I was chosen to serve in the chaplain position at the state level. You can imagine what emotions were running through my head when my name was announced that day at the State Convention.

Excitement rushed through my bones, but dread lingered there as well. How will I serve in this position without fighting with my personal values for a whole year?

The day I got elected I sat down with the retiring chaplain, Jordan Anderson. She explained that she went through the same struggle.

But she explained to me the importance of the keystone. The keystone is crucial to holding everything together;

FROM THE OFFICERS STATION



ZALEIGH WADE
CHAPLAIN

that is a symbol that should not be taken for granted.

I knew that God would be with me throughout this year when Jordan pulled out a Bible from her bag, the chaplain Bible that has been passed down year after year.

When she put that book in my hands, tears came to my eyes. I knew the Lord put me right where I was supposed to be.

Member Spotlight: Tyrone Student Is Scientist and Firefighter

Rayann Walls is the 17-year-old daughter of Doreen and Alan Walls from Tyrone, Pennsylvania. Walls is currently a senior at Tyrone Area High School, where she’s been involved in the Tyrone Area FFA program since 2019.

In previous years Walls held the position of treasurer and president in her chapter. This year she will be serving as the chapter’s student adviser.

Throughout the past four years, Walls has been involved in various activities from career development events to leadership development events and even eight different supervised agricultural experiences.

Five of her SAEs are active and range from agriscience projects, service at a volunteer fire company and employment at a local candy store to breeding and market sheep projects.

Walls got involved in agriscience and sheep projects through her agricultural educator, Mrs. Tiffany Hoy. Walls was introduced to agriscience projects in her agricultural food and natural resources class as she learned it would be part of her midterm grade.

For the past three years, Walls has

focused on completing research based on arsenic crystals being found in baby food and the effects that they could cause.

Her first year completing this project led Walls to place first in her category in the state and 14th nationally; this project has also helped her become a finalist in agricultural research integrated systems twice, during her sophomore and junior years.

During this project, Walls learned hands-on and personal development skills while working with college professors and other prestigious adults. Walls also learned many skills as she gained a deeper understanding of the scientific process, developing research questions, and forming and testing her hypotheses.

This opportunity has led Walls to virtually job shadow a few college professors and get a feel for planning for her future career following graduation.

Walls has been around the fire service for 17 years, but she has only been a volunteer firefighter at the Neptune Fire Co. for two years.

Walls was introduced to the fire department at a young age because of her father, Alan Walls. Her father has been a

firefighter for almost 25 years. Over the past two years, Walls has logged over 150 hours of training, from learning CPR, first aid, and hazardous material operations to taking the training to become an exterior firefighter.

Rayann completes weekly in-house training every Thursday night. Next spring, she will turn 18, which qualifies her to take training to become an interior firefighter.

Since the company she serves is a volunteer department, it works closely with the community to educate and inspire others to join the fire service. In the state, almost 96.8% of the commonwealth firefighters are volunteers.

In 1976, the state had 300,000 volunteer firefighters, but in 2018, the state had 38,000 volunteer firefighters.

Walls has gained skills and knowledge that she will continue to use in her future endeavors as she strives to serve others.

This story was written by Rayann Walls, the Tyrone Area FFA student adviser, and edited by Jeremy Rose, the Pennsylvania FFA reporter.



Rayann Walls, in the yellow helmet, changes a self-contained breathing apparatus at a multi-dwelling fire on July 18.

Pennsylvania FFA Announces Theme

The 2022-2023 state officer team members began training a week after their election. As they hung their first flip chart on the wall, the officers thought that surely they could come up with a theme name or phrase.

The team used the method of putting sticky notes with themes written on them, on a flip chart labeled “Theme Ideas” and if one member of the team didn’t like an idea they pulled it from the flip chart.

After debating for the first four days of training, the team members felt as though they had gotten nowhere and ended up with a blank flip chart, multiple times.

They continued to debate ideas, but one thing the team agreed upon, was that they wanted the theme for this year of service to be unique. After generating many ideas, late in the afternoon on July 8, they officially discovered a theme! As the officers were surrounding the flip chart, one lonely sticky note was left: “Unwritten.”

Unwritten stories, unwritten opportunities, and unwritten futures await the officer team this year. The officers couldn’t be more excited to turn unwritten into written by the end of our term as state officers.

This year the officer team looks forward to helping members write their stories and turn their unwritten moments into written memories.

Officers Receive Training and Network in First Months on Duty

JEREMY ROSE
Pennsylvania FFA Reporter

As the state officers are just getting started with their year, they have been very busy throughout the month of July and heading into August.

Since being elected, the team has gone through training with Taylor Curtis, a facilitator from National FFA. Curtis taught the officers a great deal of knowledge, including how to interact with FFA members, and business and industry professionals, and even highly valued life advice in general.

Curtis served as a state officer in Tennessee prior to working for National FFA as a facilitator. The FFA state officers were honored to work with her.

After training in both Erie and Harrisburg, the officers once again packed their bags as they were on the road again.

They attended the Pennsylvania Association of Agricultural Educators conference at the Delaware Valley University in Doylestown.

The team networked with teachers from across the commonwealth, as well as with senior Penn State students who will soon be student teaching with hopes of becoming agricultural educators. It was an incredible learning experience for all of the state officers to be a part of.

Following the PAAE conference, the next stop was the State Officer Summit in Washington, D.C. At the summit, state officers from all across the country met, as they discussed delegate issues that will be reviewed and voted on at the National FFA Convention in October.

State officers had the opportunity to explore Capitol Hill and were humbled by a tour of Arlington National Cemetery. The team also talked with members of both the House and Senate in D.C. about the Farm Bill and the FFA Caucus.

The last event for the officers in the month of July included a business industry visit at PennAg Industries Association. PennAg is a full-service membership association supporting the state’s agribusinesses of all sizes. PennAg advocates through government, public and media affairs.

Overall, the state officers had an incredible month of learning, growth and development and cannot wait to see what is waiting in the months ahead!