

The Michigan FFA Creed

February/March 2008



The Michigan FFA Creed



Issue 2 Volume 6

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I believe in...

You. We believe in each and every member of the Michigan FFA Association with knowledge that they will do amazing things; amazing things in their chapters, in the state association and in the national organization. The members are the most important part of the Michigan FFA and we would be lost without you.

This belief is shared by all of your state officers and we hope you accomplish your dreams. Remember your dreams are never too big and no matter what they are, the FFA can help you accomplish them.

Put all of your effort towards achieving those dreams and we will be there to help you accomplish them.

Remember – never say “I can’t” because you can and we believe you can.

In an effort to show our belief in this great association, the state officers will have visited every chapter in the state of Michigan. Chapter Blitz was a time for us to get to know all the members and their chapters. We had a blast meeting all of the new and returning members and hope we helped you in some small way to accomplish your dreams as a person and as a member of a chapter.

The 2007-2008 Michigan FFA State Officers challenge you to achieve your dreams and know that we believe you can accomplish them!

Dates to Remember...

February

6-7	District Leadership Contests
14	State FFA Office Interviews - Regional Level
20-21	Regional Leadership Contests
22	State Convention Registrations due
22-24	State FFA Officer Interviews - State Level

March

5-7	State FFA Convention
13	Board of Directors Meeting - MSU
28	Marketing Plan Papers Due

Sweet Traditions, New Conditions



By: Katie Eldred
MSU Agriscience Education Major

Standing on the corner of Main Street, one can see three churches, the museum, a park and the hardware store. Think of a few other businesses thrown in, the clip-clop of horse hooves on the pavement as an Amish buggy passes by, and the faint blink of the red, four-way stoplight flashing above you and you've just captured Vermontville; a quiet little town that rests approximately thirty miles southwest of Lansing; population 789. On any given day, one might expect to find a few cars and trucks parked in town, a few friendly faces on the sidewalks and maybe the murmur of a lawnmower in the distance, but that's about all.

Every April, however, this sleepy little town comes alive with excitement as people flock to the streets for one thing – the Vermontville Maple Syrup Festival. It's an event that's been held for the past 67 years and serves as a way for local producers to market their products and bring the community together. Situated in an area with a large population of sugar maples and founded by Vermont settlers, Vermontville has earned itself the title of "the sweetest little town in Michigan."

Two months before the festival, the large billboard-like sign announcing the dates of the year's festivities atop a giant stack of pancakes arrives in front of the museum, and for me this often signifies the beginning of the countdown. When the week of the Maple Syrup Festival finally arrives, the anticipation mounts as amusement rides and food stands offering anything on a stick, begin showing up in town. As kids, we even used to fight over the window seats on the school bus that would give us the best view of the rides parked outside the village garage

awaiting their big debut.

For us, it was like Christmas, something we'd waited for all year long. Town was bustling with last minute preparations, the roads were blocked off to set-up, and school was even cancelled on Friday!

Everyone in town is involved with the festival in some capacity or another. When I was four years old, I participated in the festivities for the first time myself; my brother and I were part of the Kiddie Parade. From there I moved up to helping with the 4-H petting zoo, serving pancakes with the Band Boosters, marching in the Grand Parade with the high school band, and in 2005, I was even selected to be on the Queen's Court. As have many families in the area, my family has been very active in the Maple Syrup Festival with several of my relatives serving as Queens themselves, including the reigning Vermontville Maple Syrup Festival Queen, my little sister, Emily.



The author's great-grandfather (second from right) stands with family in front of his sugar shack

The reason I share all of this information is only to demonstrate how much of an impact the maple syrup industry has had on my life and the life of my small town. And that's why I'm so concerned - the industry that has played such a large role in developing my hometown and created such a sense of community pride is in trouble. No, it's not a beetle or an invasive species or otherwise competitive plant that threatens the livelihood of the maple syrup industry - it's the weather.

In the movie *An Inconvenient Truth*, it was reported that every one of the ten hottest years on record have occurred within the last fourteen years. This data shows the steady increase in temperature that we have been experiencing. The production of maple syrup is very dependent on the weather, which poses a problem. Because there is no easy way for producers to check when trees are ready to be tapped in the late winter/early spring, they typically rely on records from years past. With temperatures increasing, the syrup season has been both starting and ending earlier than normal. If syrup producers don't take this into account, they could be at a real loss. By tapping too early, they risk the possibility of their trees going 'dry', which happens when the drilled hole closes due to bacteria growth. By tapping too late, they run the risk of missing out on valuable sap collection times and they may not be able to collect as much sap from the tree as in previous years.

Optimal times for sap collection are when the nights remain cool and below freezing, while the daytime temperatures begin to warm to near 40 degrees. When it's cold out, the sap within the tree stays frozen and once it warms up, the sap begins flowing up the tree and out towards the branches. As cool temperatures arrive for night, the sap flows back down the tree and towards the roots. On warm days the pressure inside the tree is greater than it is outside of the tree causing the sap to seep out any holes in the maple, including those made by humans.

To collect the sap, producers drill one or more holes in the tree, (depending on size) and insert a spile allowing the sap to drip out into a collection bucket. It's important that these buckets have protective lids to keep insects, animals and debris out. It is also important to check the buckets daily, especially as the weather warms and the sap begins to flow more heavily. Of course, this is not the only way that sap can be collected from maples; vacuum lines can also be used and may even be more beneficial as time goes on, due to global climate change.

This new technological advancement is able to collect more sap per tree than traditional buckets, however producers must balance the cost of this system with their operation size. For a large maple syrup production operation, where several thousand trees are tapped, vacuum lines could be very necessary to reduce losses that come with the changing of the sugaring season. Another, even newer option is the use of taps that help minimize bacteria growth and allow the drilled holes to remain open longer. In a March 2007 article for the *New York Times*, Pam Belluck interviewed Mr. Rick Marsh, president of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association. He said farmers tell

him they can't afford to keep making these kinds of changes in technology. His response? "[They] can't afford not to." Even if producers chose to discredit global warming, as some do, they can't deny the fact that their season is changing and if they want to remain competitive in the business, they will eventually have to make some changes to their management practices.

Although no data is available for Michigan at this time, experts predict a 6-10 degree increase in average temperatures in the New England area by 2050 (www.boston.com). If this kind of drastic change is expected in the northeast region of the U.S., we can estimate at least some increase in average temperature will occur here in the Midwest, as well. Because of the change in temperature over time, some scientists even predict that more maple syrup production will slowly move north, into Canada. While scientists agree other factors may come into play, Canadians now lead the world in maple syrup production, with 80% of the total syrup produced globally coming from Canada and the remaining 20% coming from the U.S. "Today it's exactly the opposite. The climate that we used to have here...has moved north", said Barrett Rock, a professor at the University of New Hampshire. Fifty years ago, the U.S. led maple syrup production at 80%, a 60% decrease in production over that span has led us to where we are today. If temperatures continue to rise, as they are predicted to, the cool climates where maple trees thrive may no longer be able to support them and Michigan may see an increase in oak and pine trees, which are more adjusted to mild temperatures.

This change could mean the loss of family farms that have been in existence for generations. In a particularly alarming statement, Professor Rock even exclaimed he thinks that as a whole, "the sugar maple industry is on its way out". The loss of these syrup operations would be devastating to families, but could also cause a substantial blow to Michigan's economy. Michigan usually ranks 6th or 7th in the country for syrup production, pumping in over 2.5 million dollars a year to the state (www.mi-maplesyrup.com). A loss this large is sure to have many negative implications. As a resident of Vermontville, a town known for its ties to maple syrup, it is disheartening to know the basis for our existence in this area may be lost. The Maple Syrup Festival brings out the best of our small community, grandparents reminiscing about collecting sap when they were little, and with several generations of family in tow, line Main Street with their glistening glass jars of amber-colored syrup. In all of my twenty years, I'm proud to say that I've never missed the Maple Syrup Festival and I simply cannot imagine Vermontville without it; I sincerely hope my children are around to be part of this small town tradition.

Whether you personally believe in the affects of global warming or not, it is a fact that the average temperatures on the Earth are increasing. The science behind this phenomenon is extremely important and the best thing you can do now is to educate yourself. Know what kinds of things effect weather patterns and what is happening around the world in regards to climate change. Simply knowing these issues will help.

Blue Jackets, Bright Futures:



80th National FFA Convention In Review

By: **Andrew Walker**
MSU Political Science Major

“May we accomplish our purposes. I now declare the first general session of the 80th National FFA Convention duly open for the transaction of business, or attention to any matters which may properly be presented.”

These words opened the 80th National FFA Convention, which was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 24-28, 2007. This was the second year the convention was held in the city of Hosier State. Nevertheless, over 50,000 members from

all 50 states and Puerto Rico converged on the city, creating a “sea of blue corduroy.” The theme, Blue Jackets, Bright Futures, was exemplified through the many activities during the week.

During the week of the festivities, six Michigan state officers were able to represent the state as official delegates. They debated and voted on issues affecting the organization on the national scale. Issues ranged from Junior High and freshmen opportunities to Agricultural Literacy programs. Bailey Albright, the 2007-2008 Region I State Vice President, served on the National Officer Nominating Committee and helped select the six national officers for the coming year. This year’s convention marked the grand opening of the new National FFA Merchandise Center. The opening of the center shows growth in the organization and should provide members with a more efficient service. A ribbon cutting ceremony took place on October 21st to commemorate the event.

Many members from the Michigan FFA Association proudly represented the state in National Career Development Events. Beginning after the Michigan FFA State Convention in



March, through the entire summer, teams and individuals prepared to compete at the national level. Whether it was fine tuning Parliamentary Procedure tactics or practicing Dairy Judging, members brought talent from all corners of the state. Numerous individuals did extremely well in receiving high honors. Tim Wilke of the Sanilac Career Center was named the national winner for the Diversified Crop Production – Entrepreneurship Proficiency Award. Hailing from the Branch Area Career Center, Amanda Earl was recognized as the National Runner-up Agriscience Student of the Year. Congratulations to all the Michigan FFA members who competed at the national level!

This year's convention was jam packed with fun and excitement for everyone. Numerous members participated in the National FFA Days of Service, performing community service projects around the greater Indianapolis area. The city was brought alive with two concerts by Montgomery Gentry and The Beach Boys. The career show, held in the Indiana Convention Center served as a great resource in looking for colleges and job opportunities, as well as a little relaxed fun. Members experienced the large shopping mall, including the FFA Mega Store. This was popular for those who purchased FFA apparel and paraphernalia. The Michigan FFA Association booth was on display for members to visit, witnessing the largest FFA jacket in the world from the Springport chapter!

The six national officers presented nine convention sessions recognizing a year's worth of accomplishments. Eighty-two members from Michigan were honored by receiving the American FFA degree. Session highlights included the Stars over America Pageant which recognized sixteen of the brightest members in the organization nationwide, for their excelling Supervised Agricultural Experiences. Major donors of the National FFA Foundation were recognized, as well. The National FFA Organization was pleased to announce that this year the membership has exceeded 500,000 members, the first time in 29 years! This will help in reaching the "10 by 15" goal; creating 10,000 quality chapters across the nation by 2015. Retiring addresses were presented from all six of the national officers, inspiring members with their motivational messages. The National FFA Executive Secretary, C. Coleman Harris, retired after 30 years of dedication in that position to the organization. The national band and chorus were also at hand to entertain members and guests with their outstanding talent.

A National FFA Officer is the highest elected position in FFA. Gabriel Holdwick of Harbor Beach represented Michigan as the national officer candidate. He did very well, advancing to the final round of interviews. The



Region IV State Vice President Nate Deschepper carries the Michigan flag

convention culminated with the selection and installation of six new national officers. The new officers will represent members and the organization on a national scale for the 2007-2008 year. They will also host the 81st national convention.

“We are about to adjourn the ninth and final session of the 80th National FFA Convention. As we mingle with others, let us be diligent in labor, just in our dealings, courteous to everyone and, above all, honest and fair in the game of life.”

These words signaled the end of a great week for FFA in Indianapolis. Members experienced new opportunities and witnessed the strength of the FFA organization. It is a time many will not forget because of the fun and excitement. As fall came and then went, so did national convention. Throughout the next year members will stay busy with class projects, SAEs, and leadership contests, awaiting next fall for the 81st National FFA Convention.

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Do you or someone you know have an impressive SAE? If so, please email grezesz1@anr.msu.edu and let us highlight the student!!!

Member



Region I Mary Wert, BACC

Mary Wert, a senior at the Branch Area Career Center, was first motivated to join the FFA by a new friend's passion. She credits her friend with helping her realize that the FFA is not just an organization, but a family bonded by the blue corduroy jacket. Mary's SAE is in diversified livestock production. Currently her primary focus is lamb production, but she also raises market hogs each year for the Branch County Fair.

Currently serving as chapter secretary and Region I Reporter, Mary has attended both state and national convention, as well as the State Leadership Conference for Regional Officers and Region I Leadership Camp. When she graduates, Mary plans to attend Michigan State University to study the Dairy Management Program; after which, she hopes to pursue a career in artificial insemination.



Region II Andrew Kellenberger, Jonesville

Sophomore FFA member Andrew Kellenberger of the Jonesville FFA Chapter began his Supervised Agricultural Experience in the eighth grade at the Denningson Dairy Farm. There, he is involved with a variety of tasks including unloading hay or picking rocks and helping out in the milking parlor.

With his busy SAE and work in the chapter, Andrew still finds time to play football and track. He also has a passion for doing volunteer work throughout the school.

When he graduates from high school, Andrew plans to attend Tri-State University in Indiana to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering, hoping to specialize in remodeling and restoring engines.



Region III Dustin Baker, St. Louis

As president of both his chapter and Region III, Dustin Baker is a role model for both his chapter and his region. A senior in high school, Dustin joined the FFA in junior high school. Like every successful FFA member, Dustin has a strong SAE. His SAE includes raising beef and sheep which make up his diversified livestock project. Having shown at the Gratiot County Fair, the state fair and some national livestock shows; Dustin's SAE has helped him become the accomplished showman that he is today.

Outside of the FFA, Dustin still makes time for many other activities. He is involved in student council, Spanish club, National Honor Society, Model UN and track. Upon graduating, Dustin will be attending Michigan State University next fall to study animal science and pre-veterinary medicine.

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Highlights



Region IV Tyesha Rollie, OSTC-SE

Tyesha Rollie is a senior member of the OSTC-SE FFA chapter. Currently she serves as the reporter of both her chapter and Region IV. She has a successful SAE in agricultural services that started during her junior year of high school when she began working at PetSmart bathing dogs. From her SAE, Tyesha has gained an abundance of knowledge about canines, that prior to her job at PetSmart she was unaware of, including many aspects of caring for dogs.

Tyesha first joined the FFA as a junior after the strong encouragement she received from her advisors when she began attending OSTC-SE. The thing that she likes best about being in FFA is the opportunities she had to meet so many diverse members. This fall, Tyesha hopes to attend Michigan State University to study pre-veterinary medicine.



Region V Tim Spoelman, Ravenna

Ravenna FFA member Tim Spoelman rises early each morning in order to prepare feed for eight pens of deer, totaling nearly 115 that he is responsible for. Tim's SAE is wild life production and management in which he works on his dad's deer farm, raising and selling deer. Throughout his years of involvement, he feels that his SAE and the FFA has taught him many skills that will be useful throughout life. Tim claims that he has learned several valuable life lessons, and that as a result of being an FFA member he is now a much more outgoing person.

Outside of the FFA Tim takes an active role in his school and community. Currently, he serves as president of his class and participates in his church's youth group. Upon graduation, he plans to attend Michigan State University to study agricultural business management.



Region VI Kelli Rau, Ogemaw Heights

A freshman at Michigan State University, Kelli Rau is no new-comer to the agricultural community. Born into a long line of local farmers, she has been working with cattle since the age of three. She has had numerous animal projects throughout her lifetime. Her SAE is diversified livestock production with animal projects ranging from dairy and beef to sheep and goats.

Kelli began her FFA career as a freshman member of the Ogemaw Heights FFA Chapter, serving as chapter secretary and reporter during her career there. She says that the FFA has taught her self-motivation and that nothing is more rewarding than achieving a goal. Kelli plans to graduate from Michigan State University with a degree in Animal Science and Agriscience. After graduating, she plans to become an Agriscience Teacher.



The classics are back!

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TRAVERSE CITY
WEST BRANCH
WILLIAMSTON



The 2007 FFA Tractors are now on sale.

This year's FFA tractor is a 1/16 scale Farmall 806. The first Farmall in the series! It is available at Tractor Supply Company (TSC) stores statewide. All proceeds benefit the Michigan FFA Foundation.



Now only \$56.98!

For more information about how you can support the FFA, contact the Michigan FFA Foundation at (517) 432-2482 or online at www.michiganffa.com

The Rest of the Story...



Dustin Grezeszak **State Reporter**

State Reporter Dustin Grezeszak was involved in agriculture since the time he was born, therefore it was no surprise that he decided to attend Michigan State University to study animal science, where he is currently a freshman.

Originally from the Whittemore-Prescott FFA Chapter, Grezeszak originally joined the FFA as a seventh grade member. During his years of service there, he filled several leadership roles serving as vice president of his chapter and sentinel of his region during his junior year; and president of both his chapter and Region VI during his senior year. He also participated in a few leadership contests: Greenhand Conduct of Meetings, Parliamentary Procedure and Demonstration for two years.

Beef steers, market lambs, dairy cows, rabbits and horses; five animals that make up his everyday life, have played a large role in shaping his SAE. He has successfully showed rabbits at the national level and steers and lambs at the county fair for eight years. He works on his family's dairy farm milking cows. Most recently he has added showing horses to his resume.

Dustin was also very active outside of the FFA during his high school career. He was a member of the drama club all four years of high school and had a part in the school play each of those years. He was also the president of his class his junior and senior years and a member of the equestrian team. In his spare time, Grezeszak enjoys watching Gossip Girl and eating microwave popcorn. He also likes cruising in his car and riding his horse Dreamer.

Brittany Armbruster **Region III State Vice President**

Michigan FFA, meet the one and only Brittany Armbruster, who is currently serving you as this year's Region III State Vice President. Originally from the Laker FFA Chapter, she has a strong pride in her home town and deep agricultural roots. Armbruster was initially encouraged to join the FFA by her family. She credits her father, who was one of the first students of her advisor Mr. Wheeler, with being one of the primary people who inspired her to become a member. Her older brother Adam, who was also a member, also played a key role in her decision.

During her high school years Armbruster says that she was sort of an, "FFA geek," being she didn't participate in much else. As a result of this, her resume is filled with several highlights that are accredited to the organization. She served as both chapter president and reporter, and also served her region as sentinel.

When this state officer is not busy jetting off to Region III for chapter visits she can be found chilling out on Michigan State University's campus where she is currently a freshman. She also likes spending time eating her favorite candy Swedish fish, or cooking her favorite dish chicken parmesan.

She would like the Michigan FFA to have this message, "Life isn't fair. Life doesn't care how much you have or don't have. So take each moment you have and hold on to it. Live each moment like it was water running through your hands. Let nothing get you down. And when all seems lost know that there are people out there who love and care for you and are right there to lift you up and give you a boost. "



YOUR JOURNEY STARTS AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY!



Get where you're going with one of the two new majors from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources CARRS (Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies) Department!

In the Fall of 2008, two new majors will be revealed within the CARRS Department: Environmental Studies and Agriscience & Park Recreation and Tourism Resources.

In the Environmental Studies and Agriscience major, options will include: Communication, Community Engagement and Education, Science and Policy, as well as Agriscience and Natural Resources Teacher Education.

In the Park Recreation and Tourism Resources major, options will include: Community Engagement and Education, Commercial Recreation and Tourism, Community Recreation and Zoo and Aquarium Sciences.

For more information please contact: Dr. Randy Showerman (showerma@msu.edu), Dr. David Krueger (kruege20@msu.edu) or Dr. Jenó Rivera (jeno@msu.edu).



Alumni in Action



Shown at left are those that attended the School Leaders trip to Indianapolis to the 80th National FFA Convention. There were nine administrators or school board members on the trip. The school leaders were from the following schools: Byron, Chesaning, Cassopolis, Hopkins, Lapeer Tech Center, Marshall, Olivet, Springport and Stephenson. Lori Chamberlain, Executive Director of the Michigan alumni and Floyd Beneker, President accompanied the school leaders and coordinated the effort.

The 57th Poultry Contest was held November, 2007. Alma and Durand tied for first place in the Broiler division while North Huron became state winner in Cornish.

This year also marked the beginning of new era as Dr. Darrin Karcher joined the legendary Dr. Sam Varghese as co-judge of the contest. Dr. Karcher has been hired by Michigan State University in preparation of Dr. Sam's retirement from the university.





The Cornerstone

Michigan FFA Foundation

Ag Heritage license plate cruises along for FFA, Agriscience Education

As you prepare to register your car, think of the FFA. The classic Great Lakes blue-and white license plate is no longer available in Michigan (as of 2007). So why not support a cause with a beautiful Agricultural Heritage Plate?

A portion, of every sale, of an Agricultural Heritage license plate supports the Glassbrook Endowment. Administered by the Michigan FFA Foundation, this endowment funds agriculture and natural resources education and leadership initiatives for K-12 students across the state.

The specialty plate, which features a red barn, silo and rolling green fields crowned with the sun, is one of the biggest revenue generators for the endowment. It raised nearly \$250,000 since its introduction in April 2001.

“The Michigan FFA Foundation is proud to see our legislative leaders stand behind this valuable program, and we are grateful to the people of Michigan for supporting it,” said Jim Bosserd, president and chief executive officer of ChoiceOne Bank. He also serves as chairman of the Michigan FFA Foundation Board of Directors.

“Revenue generated by the Agricultural Heritage plate helps the FFA continue to provide leadership programs for youth and assists in the continuation of agriscience education in Michigan schools,” said Bosserd.

The Agricultural Heritage plate costs \$35, and each sale contributes \$25 to the Glassbrook Endowment. The Glassbrook Endowment also collects \$10 each time the specialty plate is renewed.

“FFA members and parents can help support agriscience programs in Michigan and show their agricultural pride with this plate,” said Michigan FFA Foundation Annual Fund Director,



Megan Hirschman. “FFA members can encourage their family members and friends to help support this great program, through the purchase of an Agricultural Heritage license plate.”

Current state law does not allow specialty fund-raising plates to be used as official license plates on vehicles that use farm and log license plates.

Farm vehicles such as pickup trucks used strictly for business are covered by a separate license plate system that charges farmers a reduced fee and helps law enforcement officers more easily differentiate farm vehicles from passenger vehicles. For these vehicles, owners can purchase an Agricultural Heritage collector's plate that can be affixed to either a window or the front end of the farm vehicle. The collector plate also costs \$35, with \$25 benefiting the Glassbrook Endowment.

The Agricultural Heritage license plate can be ordered by mail, fax or in person at a Secretary of State branch office. Order forms are included with registration renewal notices and also can be obtained online at www.michigan.gov/sos.

More information about the Glassbrook Endowment is available from the Michigan FFA Foundation Web site at www.michiganffa.com/foundation.

If you are interested in supporting the Michigan FFA Foundation please feel free to contact the FFA Foundation Annual Fund Director at (517) 432-2482 for more information.

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We're more than you imagine....