The Michigan FFA Creed

May/June 2006
Members Highlights
FFA members from across the state highlight their SAE projects and experiences.

MI Women in Blue Corduroy
Alyn Kiel tells the story of women who have worn the FFA jacket with pride in the State of Michigan.

The Rest of the Story...
Learn more about those who are serving as your 2005-2006 Michigan FFA State Officer Team.

Alumni in Action
The Michigan FFA Alumni shares the happenings of its annual meeting and the WLC Scholarships handed out at state convention.

Tractor Supply Company
Learn more about TSC, the Michigan FFA Creed’s newest sponsor.

I believe in...
State Officers continue their discussion on the meaning behind the FFA Creed.

Convention In Review
The 78th Michigan FFA State Convention adjourns, but memories live on.

Learning to Do
The USA FFA Chapter, its alumni and community fight to stay afloat.

Doing to Learn
Michelle Cole shares her interesting SAE with the membership.

Earning to Live
Two Montague FFA members share a story of a life and little bird full of meaning and hope.

Living to Serve
Members of the Wexford-Missaukee FFA Chapter make a viable difference in their community.

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The 78th Michigan FFA State Convention was a living testament that truth and hope can be found in the fifth and final stanza of the FFA Creed. That powerful passage reminds us:

“I believe that American agriculture can and will hold true to the best traditions of our national life and that I can exert an influence in my home and community which will stand solid for my part in that inspiring task.”

Exerting an influence could have been the theme of this year’s convention because that is just what you, the members, did. In armfuls, in boxes and in trucks you brought a total of 5,781 sweatshirts and blankets for those devastated by Hurricane Katrina. You emptied your pockets and raised $765.55. It’s amazing what we can accomplish when we work together.

Your determination and dedication towards bettering the lives of others wasn’t shown just at convention, but throughout the entire year. The Hopkins FFA continued its 22 year tradition of preparing Christmas baskets for the impoverished in their community. Oakland SE created and decorated grapevine wreaths to sell with proceeds going to the American Red Cross. The members of the Ravenna FFA cooked breakfast for a local senior group. The examples of service go on and on and the awe that we, the state officers, feel is never ending.

We have been proud to represent the state of Michigan and its diverse members. We have been proud to represent those that truly believe in the future of American agriculture - a future that is bright and secure because of your continued efforts and belief in the principles upon which our organization was founded.

It is our wish as the outgoing state officer team that each and every one of you continue to live out the idea of what it truly means to be an FFA member.

Stay classy Michigan.

**Dates to Remember...**

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78th Michigan FFA State Convention:
Experiencing Success - Realizing Potential
Stars Over Michigan

Star Farmer
Jeff Fromm
Corunna FFA Chapter

Star in Agribusiness
Anna Timmerman
Coopersville FFA Chapter

Star in Agriscience
Sara Klebanowski
BACC FFA Chapter

Star in Placement
David McCalla
Milan FFA Chapter

Meet Your New State Officers

Region I State VP
Nicole Schaeendof
Hopkins FFA Chapter

Region II State VP
Danielle Martinez
Springport FFA Chapter

Region III State VP
Henry Reinart
Hopkins FFA Chapter

Region IV State VP
Brooke Rockenlute
OSTC-SE FFA Chapter

Region V State VP
Ashley Orlowski
Saranac FFA Chapter

Region VI State VP
Jeff Thomas
Alpena FFA Chapter

President
Alyn Kiel
Montague FFA Chapter

Vice President
Katie Eldred
Maple Valley FFA Chapter

Secretary
Gabriel Holdwick
Harbor Beach FFA Chapter

Treasurer
Anna Timmerman
Coopersville FFA Chapter

Reporter
Emily Ries
Sand Creek FFA Chapter

Sentinel
Henry Reinart
Hopkins FFA Chapter
Unfortunately, losing chapters is not a new experience within our association. Since our formation in 1929, the Michigan FFA has had 393 chapters chartered. Today, we have only 111 active chapters. Thus, between 1929 and today, 282 chapters have been chartered and then later dissolved. A chapter currently dealing with the possibility of extinction is the Unionville-Sebewaing Area (USA) FFA chapter.

With increasingly tight budgets, school boards are forced to constantly search for ways to cut back on spending. Unfortunately, because FFA is not a “core” program, it is often the first on the chopping block. With USA’s long time advisor, Carl Kieser, retiring after this year, there is a new issue. With no replacement in line, the door is now open for the school board to save the district money by not replacing their Agriscience teacher, thus dissolving the FFA program.

In the wake of this news, USA FFA members along with community members, have stepped up to the plate in an effort to save their FFA chapter. When it became evident that the chapter’s future was in jeopardy, the community responded with a huge show of support. An early action was to start a petition circulating around the Unionville-Sebewaing area to keep the program alive. Although the petition numbers in and of themselves are powerful enough, perhaps a more powerful method of persuasion has also started in the area. At the request of the FFA chapter, a letter drive has been started. What is a letter drive? The USA letter drive is asking past or present FFA members to write a letter to the USA Board of Education with their feelings of FFA, what it has done for them, and why it is important to keep the program in schools. Furthermore, it asks members to describe the skills they received through their years as an FFA student, how FFA has helped them grow as a person, and why FFA is such an important inter-curricular activity.

The USA FFA chapter has a great program. Year after year their chapter has enrolled a quarter to a third of the school’s students in their program, and it also attracts students through school of choice to attend for its Agriscience program. The USA chapter has been extremely successful over the years, receiving chapter awards at the state and national level, as well as producing 211 state degrees (nine this year alone) and 11 State Officers during their years of membership. USA has been an important part of our association, and because of the efforts of its members and alumni, we hope that it will continue to be. USA’s dedication, hard work, and perseverance in the face of adversity is an example to all of us.

The real testament of the power behind the USA FFA lies in the students that have come and gone in its organization. One such member, Brandon Lupp, served as the 1999-2000 Region III State Vice President and was once the Michigan candidate for National Office. Of his home chapter, he remarked, “Agriscience and FFA are an integral and vital part of the educational experience for more than one quarter of USA’s high school students, preparing them for personal, professional and academic success. Students, community members and industry leaders all recognize the program’s importance at USA and are working tirelessly to reinforce this message with the district’s school board and administration.”
Hard work is nothing new for Durand FFA member Michelle Cole. The high school senior has been helping out on the farm since an early age.

She said, “I grew up on my family’s dairy farm and have always loved being around it. When I was younger I would go to work with my dad and help him every chance I got. When I was almost nine years old he told me that I could start working. I started feeding calves and I loved it. When I got a little older I learned how to drive tractor and I loved that even more. The older I got the more jobs he gave me.”

Michelle works on her family’s two large dairy farms where they milk 280 cows at one and 290 at the other. When she first started working with calves she was accountable for feeding them and then shortly thereafter was moved to diagnosing, treating, and vaccinating them. They also work 2,800 acres of land where they grow hay and silage corn that is used for feed. Her family also grows soybeans and corn.

Michelle is responsible for mowing 600 acres of hay four times a year. She also is in charge of deep tilling and is sometimes used as a translator for migrant workers. Most of her work involves the equipment and working in the fields.

Her involvement in agriculture doesn’t stop at her family’s farm. She helps her grandpa, who is an NK seed dealer. With the many improvements in technology, her grandpa needs her help selling seeds. She attends many meetings with her grandpa and his field representative. Through this experience, she has become a better salesperson and it has helped raise money to purchase seeds for her family’s farm.

While not helping out on the farm, Michelle is an active FFA member in her chapter. She is currently serving as the president of the Durand FFA Chapter. Michelle is also serving as a Junior Advisor on the Shiawassee County Fair Board. Serving as a Junior Advisor entails her to build better public relations and management skills.

Some achievements and goals she has reached include saving money for college and purchasing her own pick-up truck. Michelle has been able to accomplish her goals because of her hard work, dedication, and passion for her family’s farm. Future goals are to learn the management and marketing aspect of the farm. Expanding her knowledge and involvement on the farm is a goal she continually pushes herself to achieve.

This spring Michelle plans to graduate Durand High School with honors. Michelle looks forward to attending Lake Superior for her basic classes before transferring to MSU to major in either crop and soil sciences or something involved with the dairy industry.

Sigma Alpha Sorority - MSU Gamma Chapter

Dedicated to the motto Women Excelling in Agriculture, Sigma Alpha promotes scholarship, leadership, service and fellowship among its members. Membership helps create the bond of sisterhood and friendship while promoting your career development in the areas of agriculture and natural resources.

To learn more about this premier sorority for young women leaders, contact Jen Walsh at walshje9@msu.edu
Many of those who attended State Convention this year may have noticed a yellow concrete bird being carried around by the Montague FFA Chapter. He appeared on the podium, with the band, on a plate at the State Degree dinner and countless other places around campus. Many questions were asked of the Montague members, questions like “What’s up with the bird?” and “Is that your chapter’s lucky duck?” But this concrete bird is more than a good luck charm; he has quite a history and a lot of meaning for the Montague FFA.

Ten years ago the Montague FFA Advisor, Mr. Kyle Fiebig, and his close friend Jack Schut, whom he met as a freshman at state leadership competitions, were elected as members of the 1996-1997 State FFA Officer Team. Their friendship had grown as they had served their terms as regional officers the previous year – Jack represented the Hopkins chapter and Mr. Fiebig came from USA.

As representatives of the state officer team they attended the USA FFA Chapter’s banquet where the pair won the yellow bird in the auction. They took him wherever they traveled. The bird could be seen at times strapped to the hood of a car or being carried around in a backpack. It traveled across the state with them and has the paint chips and scratches to prove it.

After the two friends finished serving their term as state officers they kept in touch but the bird was temporarily forgotten. Jack went on to finish his two year degree in Agribusiness at MSU and planned to join Mr. Fiebig as an Ag Education major.

Although no one would have known it from watching Jack, he suffered from a heart condition. He was known for his energy and enthusiasm, probably fueled in part by the Mountain Dew he always had at hand. During his junior year at MSU Jack passed away due to his heart problems. Jack willed the bird to Mr. Fiebig with the hope that Mr. Fiebig would fulfill the dream they had shared of becoming Ag teachers.

That dream has been fulfilled and if Jack could see the many accomplishments of the Montague FFA Chapter and Ag program, he would be overjoyed. The Montague chapter has named the yellow bird Juan. At leadership activities he is entrusted to a member who shows determination and leadership potential. That member is then responsible to carry Juan. The bird has become a symbol of friendship, belief in FFA, confidence to achieve your goals and the inspiration to do those things now because no one can know what the future holds.

Don’t be surprised when a little yellow bird crosses the stage with one of our members, shows up in a slide show or watches a contest. Juan is part of the Montague FFA Chapter.

Also in memory of Jack Schut, his family and friends have established a scholarship fund for the Washington Leadership Conference that is awarded at state convention each year. For more information on this incredible scholarship opportunity, contact the Michigan FFA Alumni, or visit www.michiganffa.com/alumni.
If you were to become famous, what would be the first thing you would do with your new found millions? Buy a gigantic mansion? Go on a shopping spree? Go on a tour of the world with your family and friends? If you were the Wexford-Missaukee Career and Technical Center FFA Chapter, you would find your own island.

Located in Region VI, the Wexford-Missaukee FFA Chapter has made a definitive point of serving and assisting their local land conservancy, the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy. For the last two years, throughout springtime, Wexford has helped the Land Conservancy plant trees and clean up the Waldeck Island Nature Preserve, located in Stone Ledge Lake in Cadillac. Besides clearing brush and whatnot, the FFA members also take part in building and hand painting duck houses. “We come up with possible adjustments to help make the conservancy a cleaner and inviting atmosphere,” said Wexford-Missaukee Advisor, Ms. Heather Dombroski.

The entire chapter, which includes 29 members and two classes, assists the conservancy. The members are taught a wide variety at Wexford-Missaukee including aquaculture, poultry production, water quality, greenhouse management, landscaping, floriculture, forestry and heavy equipment operation.

Materials for the project are normally generated in the class. For the duck houses, the active FFA members cut the boards on their own sawmills and design their own plans. After designing the birds’ future habitat, the students finish the project by putting the houses together. The group makes about five duck houses and has also included in their repertoire, three bat houses to encourage bat habitation.

Wexford-Missaukee also takes part in planting trees and shrubs for their local land conservancy. Specifically, the group transplants about 50 Red-Osier Dogwood and about 50 Nannyberry shrubs, both of which are native to Michigan. The vegetation is donated by Tom Williams of the local soil conservation district.

“It was a different and fun experience where we learn about wood ducks, Red-Osier Dogwood shrubs and other things,” commented senior Megan Gatlin.

The previous advisors of the Wexford-Missaukee FFA Chapter were Dale Johnson and Robert Deboer where the project was a one day trip. Now, however, the group spends much more time on the island.

The FFA members do the majority of the work for their community service project; however, they do have others who lend an extra hand. Besides Wexford-Missaukee, there are also members from the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy and the Soil Conservation District that assist in cleaning the preserve.

“It was a great day,” said FFA member Erica Hesselink, “We were able to be outside after a long winter and learn about wetland habitats.”

The park is part of the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy. It is a public piece of land that is open to the public with the only stipulation that visitors follow the guidelines of leaving everything as it is found, in order to help preserve nature.

“It was a great opportunity for the students to be exposed to a microclimate and to learn about the Cadillac Area Land Conservancy. They were able to visualize conservation at its best and understand why it is so important to continue and preserve,” said Ms. Dombroski.
Do you or someone you know have an impressive SAE? If so, please email pettyd@carrs.msu.edu and let us highlight the student!!!
Highlights

Region IV
Nate Harmon, Lapeer

Nate Harmon, a senior member of the Lapeer County Vo-Tech FFA Chapter, was named as the state proficiency winner in the area of Ag Mechanics Repair and Maintenance at the recent State FFA Convention. He has served as his chapter president for two years and as the Region IV Sentinel.

Inspired to begin his SAE of Ag Mechanics by his father and uncle, Nate said, “I work on five pulling tractors, fabricating and maintaining equipment, building and re-building engines, preparing and transporting them before, during and after the pulling season. I operate a tractor at many of the pulls.”

Outside of the FFA, Nate has been active in football and the 4-H. He hopes to continue his education at MSU upon graduation.

Region V
Tammy Davis, Muskegon

A first year member of the new Muskegon FFA Chapter, Tammy Davis is a junior in high school. As a member of a new FFA chapter, Tammy has many ideas for how she would like to shape the legacy of the Muskegon FFA. She would like to plan volunteer work for the members in an orphanage, soup kitchen or any other area where they could be of service. She said, “I really enjoyed my first state convention this year and while it's a lot of work to be involved in FFA, I’m excited about the opportunity.

Tammy is also kept busy with her involvement in Students Against Destructive Decisions, Hot Topics and softball.

After graduation from high school, Tammy would like to attend college to major in a yet undetermined field of science.

Region VI
Dustin Grezeszak, Whittemore-Prescott

As the vice president of his chapter and the Region VI Sentinel, Dustin Grezeszak is a busy man with lofty goals. In addition to the FFA, he also finds time for National Honor Society, being the president of his class, drama club and membership in countless national, state and local rabbit societies.

Rabbits have been something of a passion for Dustin. He owns a total of 60 to 150 of the animals and has even had two rabbits win runner-up and one win best overall rabbit at the American Rabbit Breeders National Convention and Show.

Dustin hopes to attend Michigan State University to study the fields of Dairy and Beef Nutrition and Reproduction.
The 78th Michigan FFA State Convention was a host to hope. Leadership contest participants aspire for a gold rating or even the proud title of “state winner,” proficiency award winners showcase their superior supervised agricultural experience (SAE) projects and a very unique group of state officer candidates anticipate a year of service to the Michigan FFA Association. Expectant and anxious, this year’s candidates share experiences akin to those of previous candidates, with one distinct variation: 11 of the 15 candidates were women. Today’s FFA members find nothing unusual about a woman donning the blue corduroy jacket or aspiring towards achievement in leadership contests or career development events. According to the National FFA Organization, 38% of FFA members are female – equivalent to over 186,000 women FFA members. Women also hold more than 50% of state leadership positions. This success would have been impossible without the efforts of early women members, which established a foundation for the aspiring young female members of today.

Women were allowed national membership in 1969, making it possible to hold office and participate in competitive events from the local to national levels. Throughout the past thirty-seven years, the National FFA Organization has also helped in the advancement of many other professional women, including news anchors, professors, and athletes.

Jan Eberly, for example, was elected the first female National FFA President in 1982. Ms. Eberly later went on to become a John L. and Helen Kellogg Distinguished Professor of Finance for the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Michigan FFA, too, has helped to develop the careers of many women, including Ms. Rosemary Ward. Ms. Ward, a former member of the Branch Area Career Center FFA Chapter, is a professional motivational speaker now living in Montague, Michigan. Helping current FFA members develop their public speaking and leadership skills is very important to Ms. Ward. This year, she provided advice and constructive criticism to Kati Kroll, a Montague FFA member who went on to receive a gold rating in this year’s FFA State Prepared Public Speaking contest.

The single step of one pioneer helps to open doors for generations to come – Lynn Whiting Powell is such a person. Originally of the Ovid-Elsie FFA Chapter, Lynn served as Secretary on the 1972-1973 Michigan FFA State Officer Team; she was the first woman state officer in the history of the Michigan FFA Association. Lynn said that she “felt welcome on the team”, but that several precautionary measures were put into place when she joined. To ensure that there were no problems between the team members, she was accompanied by a chaperone and stayed in a separate hotel room while the team was traveling. Because Lynn was the first female state officer, people were often unsure of how to react, but ultimately they realized that Lynn was an important member of the state officer team and was serving to “represent her chapter and her state”.

Since Lynn’s year of service, many women have served the Michigan FFA as officers at the local, regional, and state levels. Andrea Kerbuski, the 2005-2006 Michigan FFA State Reporter, enjoys being a state officer and says that she is “proud of the accomplishments of women and the changes that have been made [since 1969]”. Today, women members participate in leadership contests, chapter activities, and serve in leadership positions.

The hard work and dedication of women members, such as Rosemary, Lynn, and Andrea, have helped to pave the way for future women leaders from across the state of Michigan.
Joining the FFA was something of a prerequisite in State
President Jason Smith’s family. He said, “My dad and all his
brothers were in the FFA and absolutely loved it. My dad and
my current FFA advisor both inspired me to try membership
in the 8th grade. It was then that I joined Laker’s Junior High
Conduct of Meetings team and things haven’t been the same
since.”

During his FFA career, Jason has served as the sentinel and vice
president of his chapter and as Region III Vice President. He
also won a slew of awards: State Winner in Poultry Judging,
State Winner in Agronomy, State Winner in Parliamentary
Procedure and State Winner in the MFB Discussion Meet.

Jason did all that and more while he also took part in drama (he
played Kenickie in *Grease*), golf, soccer, basketball, knowledge
masters, science club and the National Honor Society.

To the members of the Michigan FFA, Jason says, “Don’t be
afraid of work or failure. Reach for your goals with absolute
resolution, and in the end, no matter what the outcome, you will
be glad that you did.”

As the Region I State Vice President, Sarah McCurley is a
freshman at Michigan State University majoring in Horse
Management. She hopes to do something with equine massage
therapies and chiropractics.

Among Sarah’s many honors within the FFA, Sarah has been a
state winner in Ag Sales. That same Ag Sales team received a
gold rating at National Convention along with Sarah.

Sarah is also very active outside of her FFA chapter. She has
been an active member of the Branch County 4-H program,
where she served as her club president. She is also a member
of the Branch County Junior Livestock Association. Sarah was
also involved in her school’s basketball and soccer programs,
all the while participating in clubs such as Students Against
Destructive Decisions, Astra, and the Young Republicans.

To the members of the Michigan FFA Sarah says, “I want
everyone to live life to the fullest, because you never know that
today might be your last. Have fun, meet new people. Like
Nike says, ‘Just Do It.’ Don’t be afraid to chase your dreams or
conquer your worst fear.”

Jason’s Jargon…

Jason would like nothing more than to just hang out and talk with friends. Of course, if you
forced him to do something, he likes golfing and basketball. His favorite movie is *Master and
Commander* and he loves Thanksgiving dinners and Snickers. Most Tuesday nights, you can find
him watching *Scrubs.*

Sarah’s Specialties…

When relaxing with mom’s fried chicken and mashed potatoes, Sarah likes to rock out to Garth
Brooks, George Strait and Ashlee Simpson. She greatly enjoys the *Thoroughbred* series (she’s read
67 of them so far!) and when watching TV, Sarah would like to tune into *Smallville* or *Two and a
Half Men.*
The 31st Annual Michigan FFA Alumni Meeting was held at Springport High School February 8th. Over 135 alumni from all six regions of the state attended. Outstanding support was given by the Springport Alumni and FFA Advisors to make the evening a huge success.

Some of the highlights of the evening were the silent and live auctions which brought in over $4200 for WLC and other leadership scholarships. In the live auction a large western scene in leather crafted by Mrs. Harley Schut took the top bid of $500. In other business, the members voted to add a Past State Officer (PSO) representative to the State Alumni Council as a voting delegate. Outstanding Affiliate Awards were presented to Marshall and Caledonia Alumni.

Officers elected to fill expired terms for the 2006-07 year are: President, Floyd Beneker; Vice President, Dave Armbruster; Secretary, Nikki Dotson; Region II VP, Helen Gill; Region III VP Becky Roosa; Region IV VP Wauneta Ritter; Region VI VP Charles Snyder; and Delegate at large is Cassie Fortin.

The Region I VP (Randy Butters) and the Region V VP (Jim May) will continue their two year term in the coming year.

Next year’s annual meeting will be moving to Region III to a site yet to be selected.

Retired Homer FFA Advisor Rod Evans acts as the auctioneer at the recent Annual FFA Alumni Meeting in Springport. State Secretary Kylee Zdunic holds the item up for bid as Jacob Washburn (far left) from the Marshall affiliate takes bids from the floor.

2006 WLC Scholarship Recipients

Michigan FFA Alumni Full Scholarships
Brittany Ambruster, Laker
Alexandria Henry, Alma

Michigan FFA Alumni Partial Scholarships
Kelli Klimek, Cassopolis
Brittany Wilson, Springport
Tori Beattie, St. Louis
Sara Raleigh, New Lothrop
Brady Fischer, Caledonia

Schut Memorial Scholarship
Savannah Weaver, Bronson

Past State Officer Scholarship
Amanda Earl, BACC

Alumni member Alyssa Reniger (far right), formerly of the Marshall FFA Chapter, assists with the refreshment table of apples and apple cider at the State Convention dance on March 8, 2006. Some 600 FFA members attended the alumni sponsored event.
The 2005 FFA tractors are on sale. This year’s FFA tractor is a 1/16 scale John Deere model 6410. It is available at Tractor Supply Company (TSC) stores statewide. All proceeds benefit the Michigan FFA Foundation. Now only $46.48.
FFA has developed a fun-filled hospitality day for everyone during the NASCAR Busch Series race

Saturday August 19
Brooklyn, MI • Event & pit tours begin at 8 a.m. • Race time 3 p.m.

HOSPITALITY PACKAGE INCLUDES

- Reserved grandstand seating in Turn 4
- FREE pit passes: 18 and older (appropriate attire only)**
- Access to FFA hospitality tent in North Village
- Morning coffee and lunch (served before the race in the FFA hospitality tent)
- Meet NASCAR personalities at hospitality tent
- Prizes and give-aways all day long (grand prize: portable welder)

All for $70 per person***
(Estimated value of package $175)

Tickets available until Aug. 4 • Race fans call (517) 592-6666

Just say, “I’m with the FFA” to receive this amazing package!
You do not have to be a member to attend.

Proceeds support the Michigan and Ohio FFA Foundations.

*Time subject to change. ** No sleeveless shirts/tank tops, shorts or open-toed shoes. ***$9 shipping & handling added to all orders.