



VATAT

News

A publication of the Texas Agricultural Education Family ☆ 2012 Volume IV, Issue IV

There "Ain't" No Better

By: Kevin Swor, President

Let me start by making a public apology to my mother. I know you taught me better and some of it soaked in, but not today. My mother retired from public education after 37 years of experience, which included senior English at several high schools. I hope she understands.

There "ain't" no better wife and daughter than the ones I have. If you don't believe me just ask other teachers around the state who have traveled with me. I can count on my family through the good and bad times, as well as in sickness and in health.

They can follow simple phone instructions while I'm several hundred miles away to put 100 head of cattle back in the pasture while it is cold, dark and raining. I received a friendly reminder that if the fence had been fixed before I left, the escape could have been prevented.

My wife even delivered a calf in the freezing rain while I attended embryo transfer school four hours away. The instructions were well received over the phone again. I was still reminded that because the cattle were artificially inseminated, an estimated date of arrival for the newborns could be predicted; therefore, a schedule could be created to determine when I should not leave town. You just have to love them.

There "ain't" no better people than agricultural science teachers. Texas is full of helpful individuals, but agricultural science teachers will

help each other at the drop of a hat. I know if my family, friends, students or I need assistance in any town across this great state, an agricultural teacher is only a phone call away, regardless the time or day. You know this is true, because we have everything - jumper cables, hay string, duct tape, tools, partial Dr. Pepper bottles, package of peanuts, aspirin, syringes, chains, etc. - in our trucks. Do the students come to you or their other teachers to borrow lunch money? There just "ain't" no better.

There "ain't" no better group than agricultural science teachers who supports their professional organization and each other. What other group can say they sacrifice to pay their dues to be part of a professional organization that around 90 percent are members? We are unified. We speak as a group and have each others' back. Is there another group who has a foundation that raises funds for the very thing we do everyday and ask for very little in return? I don't think so. Guess what? We are getting the picture and agricultural science teachers are on their way to 100 percent support. Is there another group that passes the hat for a member crisis fund? Not that I am aware of. Do you realize your contributions have helped fellow agricultural science teachers through hardships - hurricanes, tornadoes, fire, cancer, death - for their families and themselves? Let's keep this tradition going. There "ain't" no better!



There "ain't" no better group that will share the information needed to help you beat them while telling you to have on your game face. Friends, that is pure competition and a group of people who love what they are doing. They are also willing to pass on one of the greatest professions available today. There "ain't" no better.

There "ain't" no better closers out there. In baseball you can't survive long without a bull pen with a few closers or, as I would say, finishers.

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VATAT News and the benefits of advertising

Do you know of a company interested in advertising in the *VATAT News*? It is the perfect opportunity to promote a product or service to more than 4,000 VATAT members, Young Farmers, FFA Alumni, FFA Foundation partners and other agricultural and FFA supporters in Texas. Members use the *VATAT News* to receive important information about agricultural education, ag teachers conference, legislation and much more. Advertising prices are reasonable, and it is the only way to reach Texas agriculture science teachers in their homes.

Advertisers will save money on labor, postage and the announcement will not get lost in the school mail! We welcome advertising and hope to foster a lasting relationship with every company who advertises in the *VATAT News*. Please share this information with a company you think would be interested in advertising with us. For information regarding advertising formats, size requirements and deadlines, please e-mail Julie Vrazel at julie@vatat.org.

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There "Ain't" No Better

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In our FFA district, there are two teachers who stand out in my mind as finishers. They may not be at the end of their career, but they are way closer to the end than the beginning. They will help you with all their ability and out work you to beat you on the day of competition. I really wish that our profession had more finishers.

This article is relevant to where you stand. The students, staff and community have no better agriculture science teacher than you. We, as a profession, have no better than you as a friend or person who is willing to give back or lend a helping hand. Your family has no better than you to count on to love and take care of each other.

My question to you is where do you stand? I hope you enjoy your upcoming holidays and receive a much deserved rest.

Who Would Ever Question Agriculture Department Policy?

Barney McClure, VATAT Executive Director

It might surprise you that there are a number of people who will question decisions made in your department. These might include students, parents, administrators and even your school board members. What guidelines should you follow to protect yourself and your department from negative scrutiny? The days of having unwritten policies and procedures, and having everyone follow them, are probably over. You are much more likely to have your decisions questioned than ever before. What should you do to protect yourself and your department?

Develop a written Constitution and by-laws for your FFA Chapter if you don't already have them. These should serve as a framework for your FFA Chapter. The Texas FFA website has examples for these. In general, these are broad governing documents that should not have to be amended often. At the same time, develop a set of written policies and procedures that spell out the details of how things are done in your chapter. These documents should include specifically how to elect officers, how to remove officers, how teams and committees are selected and how members are selected to attend meetings and conventions. Policies and procedures should be thought of as dynamic documents that might need to be changed fairly regularly as situations change. It is important that your FFA members assist in developing and implementing these documents and are approved by the membership.

The agriculture department also needs policies and procedures separate from FFA documents. These should include management of any school project facilities, personal conduct of students both in class and outside of class and include any discipline procedures. Include language that uses the terms "may be," rather than "shall be." Don't box yourself into a corner without any way out. Grading policy should also be covered. Include any written correspondence intended to be sent home to parents.

Make sure any and all constitutions, by-laws, policies, procedures and rules follow TEA guidelines and local school policy. Take some time to read your school's written policy, so you don't create something contrary to your school's adopted rules. Then take the final step and ask your administration to approve all the documents. Your principal and superintendent should approve them or ask you for clarification. They may even ask the school board to approve them. This step gives added credibility to the process. If they are questioned about something you have done, this gives them some ownership, and they should be much less likely to blame you for the problem.

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Agriculture Department Policy

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All documents created should be posted on your FFA website and possibly even the school district's website. We have a great program and transparency is good for us all. There are two choices if faced with a question on how or why things are done a certain way. You can tell them that is how we have always done it and there are no written guidelines, or you can tell them the decision is based on approved administrative policy. Which answer would you rather give?



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VATAT Partners with SHSU on USDA Sustainable Energy Grant



Sam Houston State University



The Department of Agricultural and Industrial Sciences at Sam Houston State University was recently awarded a grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture to implement a sustainable energy education network in agriculture. Project Director Doug Ullrich, together with faculty colleagues Robert Lane and Faruk Yildiz, will lead the SHSU effort, jointly with faculty from Houston Community College and staff at the Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas, to create a multi-faceted model involving a secondary and post-secondary education pipeline that enables workforce growth in the sustainable energy sector while expanding the capacity at SHSU to prepare state-of-the-art technical knowledge and experience for those agricultural sciences students pursuing a degree. The three-year project was funded in the amount of \$693,000.

According to Dr. Doug Ullrich, "I believe the role VATAT will play in this project is vital to its success and I'm certain it was one of the reasons our project was selected over many others. The staff at VATAT will be instrumental in helping us select participants from various high schools throughout the state and assist us in providing sustainable energy curricula to all teachers

as the project progresses."

"We want to not only expand our curriculum to include cutting edge instruction in solar, wind, geothermal, biofuels and other sustainable energy sources," says Industrial Technology professor Faruk Yildiz, "but by working with both science and agriculture teachers at the secondary level, we will introduce sustainable energy concepts and practices to those that will comprise a portion of our nation's future workforce."

A primary goal of the grant is to provide a training curriculum for Texas high school teachers that will enhance their students' understanding of sustainable energy concepts while enforcing STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) comprehension. The project also aims to create a degree pathway at SHSU in sustainable energy for agricultural and industrial applications. It is envisioned that the project will impact 3,000 rural Texas high school students, thousands of community college students throughout the state, as well as develop an industry-driven, sustainable energy study specialization at SHSU within the Department of Agricultural and Industrial Sciences, which currently has over 1,200 majors.

The Story Behind the Pocket Diary

Former VATAT Executive Director John Holcomb, Dr. Travis Reese and Dr. Merrell Barfield were instrumental in producing the VATAT diary.

The idea was Barfield's. He suggested to Holcomb, who was currently serving as VATAT Executive Director, to create a diary just for the VATAT. According to Barfield, during that time teachers were given another diary, which

contained more information than the teachers needed and was also too big for their pockets.

"John was agreeable (to the idea). Travis said he would finance it, and we were off," Barfield explained.

Today the diary is distributed at the annual Professional Development Conference and also contains the Ag Teachers Creed.



Dr. Travis Reese



Dr. Merrell Barfield



John Holcomb

Professional Tip

You wore what where?!

Appropriate dress always has different meanings across various groups, but the definition seems to be more fluid than ever.

As agricultural teachers educating tomorrow's future leaders, it is important to dress in such a manner that reflects positively on the individual, the school and the agricultural education profession.

Personal appearance has direct bearing on the authority, confidence, and self-esteem of teachers, administrators and staff. Inappropriate dress could create distractions to the teaching-learning process. Dress appropriately for your position, and follow the dress code set by the school district.

Set the standard and be a role-model for your students.

Acceptable Business Casual Dress Code for Men

- Slacks/trousers/dress pants
- Shirts: polo, oxford, sweaters
- T-shirts depicting school teams/seasonal themes worn on designated spirit days only

Acceptable Business Casual Dress Code for Women

- Skirts/dresses that are no shorter than 2 inches above the knee
- Pants, pant suits, capris (mid-calf or longer)
- Sleeveless dresses/tops which meet top of arm at shoulder or are covered by a jacket
- T-shirts depicting school teams/seasonal themes worn on designated spirit days only

**It is acceptable to wear jeans in the shop.*



Texas FFA

Update

85th National FFA Convention Texas Rewind

Texans Dominate in National Agriscience Fair

Texas members brought back five national titles in the National FFA Agriscience Fair to the Lone Star State, with 12 of its 21 finalists finishing in the top three and 17 rated as gold in the four tier rating system (gold, silver, bronze, participant).

Historically, Texas members have fared well in the national competition winning 53 total Agriscience Fair national titles since the event's inception in 1998. No state has won more agriscience championships than Texas.

Texas had the greatest number of top three finishers and winners and the highest percent of its entries rated as gold medal recipients.

National Winners

- **Anya Kalsbeek/Kylie Manning, Stephenville:**
Environmental Services/Natural Resource Systems-Division 4
- **John Davis/Springer Brittain, Florence:**
Food Products and Processing Systems-Division 3
- **Blake Conners/Bailey Brashears, Frenship:**
Food Products and Processing Systems-Division 4
- **Junelyn Gamao, James Madison:**
Plant Systems-Division 2

- **Teo Daniel/Zachary Shelton, Florence:**
Social Systems-Division 3

National Runners-up

- **Valerie Gamao, James Madison:**
Environmental Services/Natural Resource Systems-Division 2
- **Kenna Faulkenberry/Scotta Faulkenberry, Stephenville:**
Plant Systems-Division 4
- **Michaela Bean/Clark Toalson, Devine:**
Power, Structural and Technical Systems-Division 3
- **William Fletcher, Judson:**
Social Systems-Division 2
- **Miranda Allison/Annie Blackwell, Florence:**
Social Systems-Division 4

Texans Claim Proficiency Awards

Texans won a pair of national proficiency awards in Indianapolis. Eight Texans were onstage as national finalists.

Thomas Glascock of Pilot Point was the national winner in Beef Production-Entrepreneurship and Hannah Treptow of Weimar captured top honors in Home and /or Community Development-Entrepreneurship/Placement.

Event	2012 TX Entry	Result	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Agricultural Communications	Florence	Gold-6 th	Gold-6 th	Gold-3 rd	Gold-4 th	Gold-2 nd	Gold-5 th
Agricultural Issues Forum	Madisonville	Gold-2 nd	Gold-1 st	Silver	Gold-1 st	Gold-1 st	Gold-2 nd
Agricultural Mechanics	Goldthwaite	Silver-19 th	Gold-13 th	Gold-4 th	Silver-20 th	Gold-10 th	Gold-11 th
Agricultural Sales	Smithson Valley	Gold-2 nd	Gold-2 nd	Gold-2 nd	Gold-11 th	Gold-6 th	Gold-3 rd
Agronomy	Burleson	Silver-16 th	Silver-14 th	Silver-19 th	Silver-19 th	Silver-12 th	Silver-22 nd
Creed	Orange Grove	Silver	Silver	Silver	Gold-2 nd	Gold-3 rd	Bronze
Dairy Cattle	El Campo	Silver-17 th	Silver-22 nd	Silver-20 th	Silver-27 th	Bronze-36 th	Silver-28 th
Environmental/Natural Res.	Blanco	Bronze-29 th	Bronze-37 th	Gold-3 rd	Silver-13 th	Gold-9 th	Silver-14 th
Extemporaneous Speaking	Crandall	Gold-1 st	Silver	Silver	Bronze	Bronze	Bronze
Farm Business Mgmt	Commanche	Silver-19 th	Gold-6 th	Gold-11 th	Gold-9 th	Gold-6 th	Bronze-34 th
Floriculture	Crowley	Gold-9 th	Gold-12 th	Silver-21 st	Silver-15 th	Gold-7 th	Silver-17 th
Food Science & Technology	Florence	Gold-3 rd	Gold-8 th	Gold-2 nd	Gold-1 st	Gold-3 rd	Gold-4 th
Forestry	Dayton	Silver-17 th	Gold-3 rd	Gold-8 th	Silver-13 th	Gold-5 th	Bronze-35 th
Horse Evaluation	Elgin	Bronze-41 st	Gold-11 th	Gold-3 rd	Silver-16 th	Gold-8 th	Bronze-43 rd
Job Interview	S.D. O'Conner	Silver-15 th	Silver-9 th	Silver-16 th	Silver	Gold-4 th	Silver
Livestock Evaluation	Frenship	Silver-16 th	Gold-9 th	Gold-8 th	Gold-7 th	Gold-1 st	Gold-6 th
Marketing Plan	Madisonville	Silver	Gold-2 nd	Gold-2 nd	Silver	Gold-1 st	Gold-3 rd
Meats Evaluation	Llano	Gold-1 st	Gold-1 st	Gold-2 nd	Gold-1 st	Gold-2 nd	Gold-2 nd
Milk Quality	Florence	Gold-10 th	Gold-1 st	Gold-10 th	Silver-13 th	Silver-12 th	Gold-3 rd
Nursery/Landscape	Katy	Gold-6 th	Gold-5 th	Silver-20 th	Silver-21 st	Silver-19 th	Gold-10 th
Parliamentary Procedure	Bellville	Gold-5 th	Gold	Gold-3 rd	Silver	Silver	Bronze
Poultry Evaluation	La Vernia	Gold-2 nd	Gold-1 st	Gold-2 nd	Gold-2 nd	Gold-1 st	Gold-1 st
Prepared Public Speaking	San Augustine	Silver	Silver	Silver	Silver	Silver	Bronze

Texans Sweep Top Three Spots in Tractor Restoration

Texas entries swept the top three spots in the Chevron-Delo Tractor Restoration Competition. Ryan Haass of the Devine Chapter captured grand champion honors, with a 1970 Case 1070. Haass won the national competition a year ago and with his follow-up victory, became the first to win two national championships in the competition. The Colin Graff of Hondo finished as national runner-up with a 1950 John Deere A, and Matt Mahler of Iowa Park finished third with a 1955 Ford 850.

A Texas entry has won the national competition four of the past five years.

The winning Texas entries were three of 12 national finalists selected earlier this year. Five of the 12 finalists were Texas entries. No other state had multiple entries amongst the 12 finalists.

Individuals or chapter teams document the restoration of old tractors in the competition and submit a detailed application which can be hundreds of pages long. Finalists make a 20-minute presentation to a panel of experts and field questions during a 15-minute question-answer round. Tractor restoration is used to teach the fundamentals of agricultural power in the agriculture, food and natural resources instructional program.

Texas CDE Entries Remain Steady in National Competition

Texas FFA's career development event entries turned in solid performances in national competition, winning two national titles. Eleven of the state's 23 entries finished in the top 10 (48%) and seven finished in the national top five. Nine states failed to crack the top 10 in any event. Since 1928, 72 Texas entries have claimed national championships. Only California has won more national titles. Seven states have never won a national FFA career development event.

National CDE's—Texas Top 10 Summary

- **National Champion: Extemporaneous Speaking,** Crandall (Wesley Garrett)
- **National Champion: Meats Evaluation:** Llano
- **National Runner-up: Ag Issues Forum:** Madisonville
- **National Runner-up: Ag Sales:** Smithson Valley
- **National Runner-up: Poultry,** La Vernia
- **Other top 10 finishes by Texas entries:**
3rd Food Science and Technology, Florence
5th Parliamentary Procedure, Bellville

- 6th** Agricultural Communications, Florence
- 6th** Nursery/Landscape, Katy
- 9th** Floriculture, Crowley
- 10th** Milk Quality, Florence

Texas Recognized for Top Membership Growth

Texas FFA was recognized for top membership growth in an award ceremony that was part of the national delegate process. Texas FFA grew by 4,784 between membership year 2010-11 and 2011-12. The Texas membership surge accounted for more than a fourth of the National FFA Organization's 16,102 student membership growth. Texas FFA has grown by more than 24,000 members over the past three membership years and was the first state association in FFA history to reach the 85,000 member mark.

Texans Receive Honorary American FFA Degrees

Texas agricultural science teachers received the Honorary American FFA Degree at the 85th National FFA Convention. Candis Carraway of Livingston, Mark Davis of Carthage, Lynita Foster of Madisonville, J. P. Hancock of Bryan-Rudder, Brian Martin of Rusk, Shelly Mowery of S&S Consolidated, Charles Prause of Bosqueville, Mark Scheu of Daingerfield, Marty Spradlin of Mount Pleasant, Larry White of Bryan-Rudder, and Laurah Williams of Stephenville received the highest honorary degree bestowed by the National FFA Organization. Each year, a state may submit nominations not to exceed 10 percent of the total number of teachers in the state.

Other Texans receiving the Honorary American Degree were Tracey D. Brent of Campbell, Jeff Burdick of Houston, Kelly L. Fisher of Whitesboro, Pamela Fleming of Little River-Academy, Rod Townsend of Decatur, Tom Whitesides of Colorado City and Joe E. Yarborough of Houston.

Texas National CDE Top Five History		
Year	Top 5 Performances	Rank
2012	7	3 rd (tied with Minnesota)
2011	8	3 rd (tied w/Washington)
2010	10	1 st
2009	6	3 rd (tied w/ FL, GA, WY)
2008	10	1 st
2007	8	1 st (tied w/Missouri)
2006	6	4 th (tied w/ Georgia)
2005	13	1 st

National CDE Titles	National FFA CDE Top Five
1. California—4 (Creed, Dairy Cattle, Marketing Plan, Par Pro)	1. California—10
1. Missouri—3 (Agronomy, Forestry, Poultry)	1. Kansas—9
3. Kansas, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington—2	3. Texas, Minnesota—7
4. AR, CT, IL, IA, OR and WY all with 1	4. Missouri—6
	5. Washington, Tennessee—5

National Agriscience State Comparison—States with Ten or More Finalists				
State	Finalists	Gold Medals	Top Three	Winners
1. Texas	21	17 (81%)	12	5
2. New Jersey	10	8 (80%)	8	3
3. California	16	12 (75%)	8	1
3. Georgia	23	10 (43%)	5	4
5. Missouri	19	7 (37%)	5	1
6. Ohio	19	7 (37%)	5	0



Foundation Update

Review, Reflection and Revival

Aaron Alejandro, Texas FFA Foundation Executive Director

We are proud to report an extraordinary year for Texas Team Ag Ed and the role our Texas FFA Foundation has played in serving our strategic interest. While our Team Ag Ed organizations do not operate on a calendar year, we do operate in fiscal years. We believe reviewing our efforts, reflecting on our strategies and reviving passion are a critical method of ensuring the quality of operations and service to our stakeholders.

We can begin our review, and look back, on the heels of the 83rd Annual Texas FFA Convention in Lubbock – the convention served as a catalyst for many of our plans and strategies to come. The record setting development of the 83rd convention provided momentum which proved to be valuable as we moved into our next fiscal year.

The 84th Annual Texas FFA Convention in Corpus Christi bookended the success of the year we had. The Host Committee – under the leadership of Chairman John Steelhammer – set an all time development record. The combined success of the 84th convention, along with our year of service and strategic alliances, highlight our year in review.

We appreciate all involved with Texas Team Ag Ed in assisting with our efforts. Here are a few key highlights of our year.

- **MYTEXASFFA.ORG.** A great agricultural education and Texas FFA promotional website was launched in October. The peer-to-peer website is a model site and represents industry best practices in communicating and marketing to our diverse audiences.
- **Justin Texas FFA Boots.** We are honored to have yet another pair of Justin Texas FFA boots and a royalty program to support our efforts. In addition to Justin's support as co-title sponsor of the annual FFA convention, their royalty program allows us to promote our collective brands and make a difference.
- **Mahindra USA Dealers Meeting.** Texas FFA Officer Alyssa Spruill and Leadership Coordinator Austin Large joined Foundation staff and National FFA Foundation staff in Galveston for the January event.
- **Texas FFA Fact Sheet.** Texas FFA Foundation staff worked with Communications Coordinator Julie Vrazel

to develop a "Texas FFA Fact Sheet," which can be utilized in conjunction with sponsorship packages, MYTEXASFFA or as a standalone promotional piece.

- **2012 La Quinta International Conference.** In February, Texas FFA Officers Kelli Neuman and Heston Heller joined Leadership Coordinator Austin Large, Texas FFA Foundation staff (Aaron Alejandro) and National FFA Foundation Director Rob Cooper in New Orleans to represent the partnership with the FFA. We had a wonderful promotional opportunity and continued to solidify this important strategic partner.

- **"Deep in the Heart."** February also became the month "Deep in the Heart" hit theaters across Texas. A strong opening weekend made DITH the highest grossing independent film nationwide. The movie is currently available for "pre-release" on DVD for the Texas FFA at <http://www.deepintheheartmovie.com/availablenow.php>.

- **Posters.** The Texas FFA Foundation supplied every agricultural educator in Texas with a series of posters to promote Texas Team Ag Ed, our professional development and efforts to sustain FFA programming. We are pleased with the feedback we have heard and appreciate the teachers who utilized the promotions supplied by the Foundation.

- **THE EXPERIENCE.** The experience campaign was launched in February during National FFA Week and has proven to be the most successful individual giving effort to date. Students, teachers, former members and sponsors can participate around three key events: National FFA Week [Recognize], State FFA Convention [Honor] and Thanksgiving [Share].

December is a great time to reflect, review and revive our passion and enthusiasm for the year to come. Thank you to all who made gifts, honor gifts or sponsored the efforts of the Texas FFA Foundation. We are honored to have your support and look forward to even better days for Texas Team Ag Ed.

May God bless our efforts in the coming year and your family too as we share the holiday season.



Texas FFA
Alumni

Update

Alumni Support Grants

Liz Treptow, Weimar FFA Alumni

An Alumni Support Grant can help more than your chapter members - it can help an entire community!

The Weimar FFA Chapter and Alumni volunteer on a monthly basis to run the community food bank in Weimar. We witness on a daily basis the impact that lack of food can have on a family. In a community of only 2,001 citizens, it is heart breaking that many of our school district's students are identified as "at risk" and/or "low socio-economic/disadvantaged." We felt it imperative to provide a source of services to these children and their parents throughout the year. Each month families may receive food along with school supplies (September), coats (November), toys (December), hygiene items (January), diapers (February) and children's books (March).

In an average month, a minimum of 100-120 volunteer hours are required to run the food bank. FFA members petition donations from civic organizations and individuals, organize food drives, order food supplies, unload trailers, pack up boxes of food and distribute them to food bank clients. Alumni members also help with these activities, as well as assist clients when they arrive at the food bank. Not only do we learn organizational skills, teamwork and nutritional requirements, but we also see first-hand what a difference is made in the lives of the 370 people who come to us for help on a monthly basis.

The Weimar FFA Chapter and Alumni rely on the generosity of the FFA chapter members and their families, alumni members and the Weimar community to provide these services to those in need in Weimar. Because the demands for services are larger than our small community can manage, it is imperative that we seek help from outside our boundaries. With Texas FFA Alumni Support Grants we have been able to purchase food for the months of September and October during 2010 and 2011. The Texas Alumni Support Grant for 2012 allowed us to purchase additional raised beds for growing vegetables to supplement the food bank with fresh produce for our clients.

Both FFA members and Alumni witness the difference they are making each time our doors open, and come to recognize the generosity of others who help us provide these services and the honor that these community members do us by allowing us to help them.

We have a brick with your name on it.

Make your mark on the VATAT brick campaign. Purchase your personalized brick to be placed in the front walkway of the Agricultural Education Ford Texas FFA Leadership Center in Austin. Pay \$100.00 for a brick today, and enjoy it for years to come. Each brick comes with a commemorative brick certificate which is perfect to frame and present as a gift!

Complete the brick order form, found online, and send it in with payment, which includes tax deductible checks, to the Texas FFA Foundation * Attention: Brick Campaign * 614 East 12th Street * Austin, TX 78701. You may also purchase your brick with a credit card through VATAT Online.

For more information about the brick campaign please contact Barney McClure at 512.472.3128 or barney@vatat.org.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity!





Texas Young Farmers Update

From the President's Pen

Connie Koopman, Texas Young Farmers President

Thank you Father for the many blessings you have bestowed upon us. We all enjoy celebrating Christmas, with the many gifts, plenty of food, fellowship of family and friends and most importantly the birth of Jesus. Remember as we shop and entertain family and friends, it would not be possible if our Jesus did not love us as much as he does.

I reflect back to when I was given the gavel to lead the Texas Young Farmers for the year. I was nervous, yet excited. I was nervous, because I knew I had to write a story every month, and I am not a writer. I was excited to know I was trusted to lead an amazing group of individuals and venture into new territory. The articles have come easier to me than one will realize. Once you start typing, the words just start flowing.

I have expanded my knowledge of agriculture by reading articles and stories, and I have amazed myself. There is much that I did not know, but I do know agriculture plays a major role in everyone's life. You don't have to farm, but you eat. I worry daily about where my food is coming from, and I am a stickler for not wasting food. There are countless people who would give anything to have a meal that we eat daily. What would you do if you walked into the grocery store and the shelves were bare? No fresh vegetables. No bread. No canned goods. Nothing. Have you ever stopped to think about it? I am concerned, because I do not want to rely on another country to provide me with food. I enjoy the freedom America has given to its people. I enjoy talking to my cows,

picking vegetables out of the garden, going out for dinner when I want and shopping for items that make me happy. With that in mind, every one of us needs to be an advocate for agriculture. There are too many people making decisions for the farmers that don't know where milk and eggs come from. We need to be proud of the heritage we have, and thank those who laid the bricks for us to follow.

I will be attending the NYFEA Institute in Memphis, Tennessee from December 5-9, 2012. There will be a group of 15 representing the state of Texas and passing out information to those in attendance, inviting them to the 2013 NYFEA that Texas is hosting in San Antonio from December 4-8, 2013. The National Committee has been working diligently to schedule tours and entertainment for our guests from across the United States. There will be a special fee for the Texas members, so you will be able to attend everything or just attend what you want. The committee has been working to make sure when our guests return home, they will talk about how they enjoyed Texas and how they want to come back and visit.

Then, the big day will arrive - the Texas Young Farmers 2013 State Convention. The board has worked very hard to make sure the members are offered extras. The Marriott Town Square in Sugar Land is our host hotel and the staff has been amazing. The board has tried to give the members some time to shop, sightsee or just visit with friends from across the state. Charter buses will be available to take you on tours. Mark your calendar for January 10-13, 2013, and come spend the weekend with us in Sugar Land.

I would like to mention that your new 2013 President will be Barry Choate. Barry is from Athens, Texas, in Area VIII. I want to wish him well and always know that I'm available to help wherever needed. Until we meet again - live, laugh and love.



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59th Annual Texas Young Farmer State Conference Sugarland, Texas -- January 10-12, 2013

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Housing Information:

The Sugarland Marriott, Town Square 16090 City Walk · Sugar Land, Texas 77479; telephone 1-281-275-8400; [Sugar Land Marriott Town Square >>](#) and will serve as the headquarters for the 2013 Conference. The rate is \$99.00 per room per night. State and Local City Tax is currently 13%. Room reservations should be made directly with the hotel by calling 281-275-8400 and requesting the **Young Farmer Conference** block and rate. You may also book hotel rooms online by following this link [Sugar Land Marriott Town Square >>](#). **Hotel reservations must be made by December 22, 2012. After December 22, 2012, the rooms will be subject to availability at a much higher rate. Make your reservations now!**

Registration Fee:

Registration will be submitted on-line at www.txyoungfarmers.org. Registration fees have been restructured this year to accommodate our members needs better. We will be offering a one day registration and a two day registration that includes tours. Early Bird registration will be from November 1, 2012 to December 14, 2012. Registration for children 2 to 12 years of age is \$50.00, under 2 are free. We will offer onsite registration. Registration fees are not refundable, but can be transferred to another member of the same chapter. **Registration payments can be made through PayPal.**

Two Day Registration includes the Friday tours/bus transportation, Saturday Brunch, Educational workshops, Awards Banquet; One Day Registration includes Friday Ag Olympics, Saturday Brunch, Educational workshops, Awards Banquet. **Pre-registration must include payment. Checks must be postmarked by December 15th to receive the early registration fee.**

Tours:

Friday's tour includes **George Ranch including a Chuck wagon Meal, followed by a tour of Twinwood Cattle Company.**

REGISTER ON-LINE AT www.txyoungfarmers.org

If a computer is not available, you can mail form and registration fees (payable to **Texas Young Farmers**) to: P.O. Box 1118, Fairfield, Texas 75840

Please print neatly:

Name _____ Area _____
Address _____ Chapter _____
City, State, Zip _____ Phone _____
Email Address _____

Please Check All that Apply

****** Early Bird Registration***** Early Bird Registration***** Early Bird Registration******

Member TWO day Registration \$130 Member One Day Registration \$100

Child Registration (2 – 12 yrs.) - \$50 Advisor Registration

Guest Registration Past Young Farmer State Officer 2013 Delegate

****** Registration***** Registration***** Registration******

Member TWO day Registration \$150 Member One Day Registration \$125

Child Registration (2 – 12 yrs.) - \$50 Advisor Registration

Guest Registration Past Young Farmer State Officer 2013 Delegate

I will be attending the SATURDAY Laws and Regulations workshop (cost of \$10.00 for 2 hours). YES

Workshops available (Check what you plan to attend, **one** per line)

CEU (laws and regs) Lower the Cost Fundraising for YF Agvocacy
 CEU (laws and regs) Farm and Ranch(contest) Wildlife
 Chapter Round table Farm and Ranch(contest) Floral Design

TOTAL Amount of Registration Due: _____ (Please include check payable to Texas Young Farmers)



Vocational Agriculture
Teachers Association of Texas
614 East 12th Street
Austin, Texas 78701

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TEXAS AG ED FAMILY EVENTS

December 2012

1st - Major Stock Show Entry
Deadline - HLSR online only

1st - Jr. FFA Dues Deadline -
Austin

1st - State LDES - SHSU

1st - HLSR Calf Scramble
Application deadline

4th-7th - NYFEA in San
Antonio

7th - Deadline for all swine
ear notch corrections / ear tag
replacement

7th - San Antonio Spurs Night

9th-10th - VATAT Board of
Directors Meeting

24- Jan 1 - VATAT Office closed

January 2013

3rd - Ford Leadership Scholars
Banquet - Austin

5th - SALE Agriscience Fair
Documentation due

7th - Texas FFA Board of
Directors Meeting - Austin

17th - Ford Leadership
Scholars online submission
deadline

18th - Southwestern
Exposition and Livestock Show
begins - Fort Worth

February 2013

7th - 24th - San Antonio
Livestock Exposition

9th - Southwestern Exposition
and Livestock Show - Fort
Worth

9th - SALE Public Speaking
Contest - San Antonio

16th - 23rd - National FFA
Week

22nd - 24th - SALE Ag
Mechanics Show

25th - HLSR begins - Houston

Vocational Agriculture
Teachers Association
of Texas

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