

"From the Duck Blind"

By: Russell Thomas, Gilmer

With October here, it's hard to believe school has been in session for two months. Fall livestock shows and the training of leadership development teams are here. Which means we, as agriculture teachers/FFA advisors, are very busy outside of the classroom.

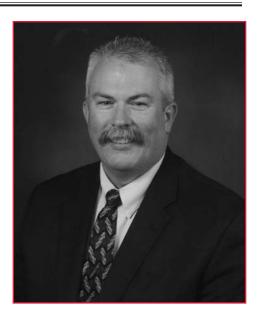
Fall is my favorite time of year because of the cooler temperatures. Hopefully, it will get here this year. It is also when we have our county livestock show, the Yamboree. Yes, we celebrate the Yam here in Gilmer! It is a great festival in Upshur County with canning, photography, fiddlers. decorating contest, barn dance and of course the county livestock show. The Yamboree carries many traditions the public looks forward to each year. With the carnival on the square for four days and the smell of turkey legs and funnel cakes, it is heaven for a junk food junkie. It is a celebration for the whole family.

Every family member can participate in some type of activity. One of the most popular traditions is the queen contest. High school senior girls represent area service clubs and sell tickets to all the Yamboree events; whichever girl raises the most money is selected to represent the Yamboree as

"Queen Yam." This is a tremendous honor and a long tradition for many families in Upshur County. This year was a very special year for the contestants because every one of them had participated in their local FFA program, which I thought was a great platform for our organization to be recognized throughout the county.

Also, fall is a time to start bow and squirrel hunting, with duck season just around the corner. Duck hunting is definitely one of my passions. I just purchased several dozens of decoys for this coming season. Don't let my wife know; she already thinks I have enough out in the barn, but you can always use a few more! Robert Reynolds and Brant Lee, fellow ag science teachers, are my hunting partners.

We have several honey holes on the lease, so the main reason for the purchase was to be able to leave the decoys there without hauling them in every morning at 5 a.m. I'm ready to put them in the water and watch those birds cup their wings into our spread. While I was out in the barn tying string and weights to the new decoys and reworking the old ones, the thought came over me that it hasn't rained in so long the decoys will be on dry land, and we may not have any ducks this



year! However, the ducks are going to migrate rain or no rain. We may not have as many, but they are still going to come.

As I continued to think about this, while finishing working with the decoys, I thought about my students. They are coming to my classroom, ready or not. Having attended our conference, participated in workshops and

Continued on page 3...

TEXAS AG ED FAMILY UPDATES

VATAT pages 1 - 5 Texas FFA page 9 Foundation page 11 Young Farmers pages 12 - 13 Texas FFA Alumni page 15

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"From the Duck Blind"

Continued from page 1

visited with agriculture science teachers about new ideas and techniques for the coming year, I am ready for the students. Our students are ready to be taught, and our job is to educate them about agriculture, life lessons and prepare them for life after high school.

I drifted away again from my tying strings on the decoys as I thought about this more, which can happen to me when I start to think about something else. Do my students truly know about agriculture? I realized I need to be more diligent in making sure my students understand agriculture and all the aspects of life that it reaches. This includes training them to be proactive and a spokesperson for Texas agriculture in their communities or wherever they travel. This is a tremendous challenge for each of us as agriculture teachers. We can come together with 4-H and teach about Texas agriculture, with the "Texas Proud" program and the continued "Quality Counts" program, and reach over 70,000 students just in our classrooms. These programs give us the opportunity to teach our students about agriculture and to grow our industry in Texas through education. Our students are coming, whether we are ready or not, and they are depending on us to educate them.

As with the uncertainty of rain for duck season, the uncertainty of the economy and budget cuts for this school year causes us to make a choice. Do we choose to let these circumstances get us down, or do we choose to make the best of it and educate our students about agriculture, life lessons and prepare them for the future, and let this be the best year, yet? I am reminded of what Thomas Jefferson said, "Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude." Let's choose for this to be the best year, yet! Our students are depending on us, all of them.

New Beginnings

Barney McClure, VATAT Executive Director

By the time you read this, school will have been in session for over a month. The "new" will have worn off and you will be in something of a routine. For many teachers, this school year is bringing more students, larger classes, budget cuts and travel restrictions. The last legislative session brought historic cuts to education and other areas. Some provisions passed

will not even take effect until next year. All teachers in Texas are being asked to do more with less resources.

However, in the midst of all the negatives, there are many positives. Weighted funding for CTE, Career and Technical Education, courses is still in place. This 1.35 funding factor means each agriculture student generates 35% more state funding than a student in a non-CTE course. By rule, 60% of that money must be used on CTE. This can provide some leverage in asking for additional funding from your local administration. Many large programs in our state are generating over a half million dollars in funding. If you would like to calculate the amount of money your program generates, visit our VATAT website for instructions.

Another positive is we are reaching more students than ever before. Well over 100,000 students in Texas spend part of their day in an agriculture class. More than ever, our classes reflect the diversity of the student body in each school district. This diversity in gender, race, interests, talents and abilities creates a new energy in many programs and provides us with a unique opportunity to influence the future of Texas. With agriculture classes available to meet graduation requirements in any plan, there is no barrier for student enrollment.

FFA events continue to evolve to meet the needs of our programs. LDE rules are under review by a teacher committee, and CDE revisions will take effect this year. Many of these changes will update contests and bring 21st Century skills to these events. Livestock and Ag Mechanics shows continue to grow and provide more opportunities for students to display skills learned in our classrooms. Speaking events and Agriscience fair projects provide SAE avenues for students who may not be interested in traditional activities.

A retired teacher I admire greatly recently explained he was proud to have taught in the "golden age" of ag education. I am not sure how to define that term, but I am pretty sure we all can create that special time in our profession. I would challenge each teacher to stay positive, and make this year part of your own "golden age" of teaching agriculture science.

VATAT TRIVIA

Post the answer on our Facebook wall!

In this month's article by VATAT President Russell Thomas, he mentioned two programs that help teach students about Texas agriculture. What are the names of those two programs?



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VATAT Membership Totals

Area 1: 94 members

Area 2: 79 members

Area 3: 250 members

Area 4: 98 members

Area 5: 201 members

Area 6: 158 members

Area 7: 162 members

Area 8: 162 members

Area 9: 141 members

Area 10: 132 members

*as of 9-14-2011

VATAT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Thank you to those who supported the VATAT Scholarship Fund this year.

RiverStar Farms Raffle: \$9.000.00

VATAT Golf Tournament: \$6,640.00

VATAT Dance: \$9,165.00

Donations: \$850.00

TOTAL: \$ 25,655.00

NAAE Update



- There is currently a national shortage of agricultural educators, and NAAE has taken the lead in recruiting students to think about a career in agricultural education. Join the Teach Ag Campaign, find resources to help you talk to your students about a career in ag ed, or help your students find a college or university with an ag ed program. There is also National Teach Ag day each year a day set aside to celebrate the profession of agricultural education. Next year's Teach Ag Day is scheduled for March 15, 2012. Find out more information at http:// www.naae.org/teachag/.
- NAAE's online professional networking community for ag educators has more than 3,000 agricultural educators from all over the United States sharing ideas. philosophies, lesson plans and resources. This is a great way to connect with other enthusiastic, supportive ag educators and improve your program in the process. www.naae.org/communities.
- NAAE, in cooperation with Purdue University, has developed an electronic mail listsery for use by agriculture teachers, state staff, teacher educators and others interested in agricultural education. The listserv allows someone to send one message to the listsery and have that message forwarded on to all subscribers to the list. For more information and to sign up, visit http:// www.naae.org/about/usagedlistserve/.
- Get quick updates on current initiatives and news through these popular social media platforms. Find NAAE on Facebook at National Association of Agricultural Educators or on Twitter @NAAE.

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Texas FFA Update

A Letter from the Executive Director

Tom Maynard, Texas FFA Association Executive Director

Three New CDE's Approved for 2012: Texas FFA will implement three new Career Development Events as part of its five-year revision process. The State CDE Advisory Committee recommended the adoption of the Environmental and Natural Resources, Homesite Evaluation and Veterinary Science.

Environment and Natural Resources: The event is designed to assess knowledge and skills related to environmental assessment including water analysis for contaminants including pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, nitrates and phosphorus, identifying pollutant sources and improvement tactics, applying GPS skills in identifying longitude and latitude of a given set of points, indentifying boundaries, laying out fencelines, ponds, drainage structures and other related facilities, analyzing soil structures and conditions, identifying equipment, plants, wildlife, fish, reptiles, amphibians, predators, birds and non-native species and addressing global environmental issues. State event location: Tarleton State. The state-winning team will be certified to compete in the national Environmental and Natural Resources CDE held in Indianapolis in October.

Homesite Evaluation: This event is designed to emphasize the importance of soils and their limitations for homesites. The importance of a soil's suitability for parks, playgrounds, roads, streets and other uses can also be considered. Many of the properties important for agricultural uses are also important for urban uses. Individual families and communities can avoid construction and maintenance problems if a study of soil conditions is made prior to construction. The soil information is used to predict potential problems associated with planned or existing homesites. Although many of the properties are the same as judging soil for agricultural use, a different set of criteria is used. Teams consist of three or four members. State event location: Tarleton State University. State winning team advances to the national competition in Oklahoma in May.

Veterinary Science: This CDE is designed to promote career and college readiness by providing opportunities to develop knowledge and demonstrate skills in the field of Veterinary Science. This event is supported by curriculum in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources from Veterinary Medical Applications, Livestock production, Small Animal Management, Advanced Animal Science, Equine Science, Practicum and Principles of Agriculture. Teams consist of three to four members with the top three counting toward the team total. Members may wear Official FFA Dress or

matching solid colored medical scrubs. Students identify equipment, animal breeds, animal body parts and parasites. There also is a skills portion and a 50-question test. State event location: Texas A&M University. In 2012, the National FFA will pilot a Veterinary Science CDE with no scholarships awarded. In 2013, National will fully implement the CDE providing funding is available.

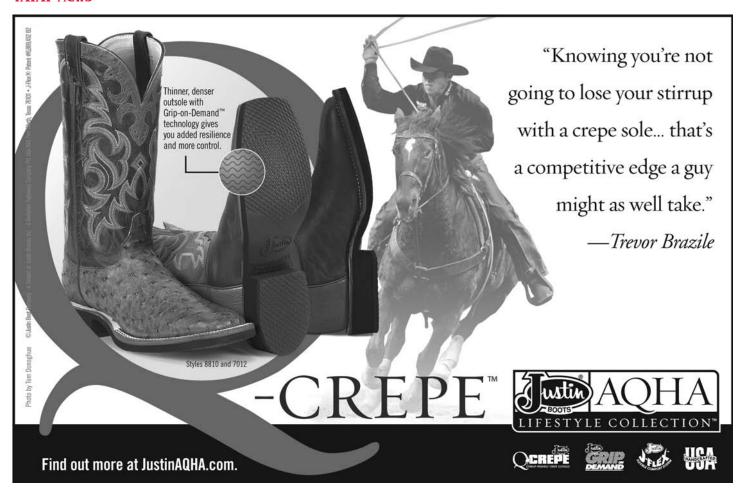
National FFA Pushes New Application Implementation Back: Citing technical difficulties, the National FFA Organization has opted to delay implementation of the new proficiency and degree applications. The national award application revision process mirrors the competitive event revision cycle. Normally one would expect new applications to take effect in the same as new CDE rules. However, in this case, the new applications will be required in 2013.

The implementation delay does not affect the National Chapter Award, which is currently available online. The revised application has new quality standards and a revised scoring rubric. The Agriscience Student Award program was eliminated as it was a duplicated by the Star in Agriscience recognition. No significant changes were made to the Agri-Entrepreneurship application.

Delegate Taskforce Will Examine Delegate Process, Intended Outcomes: A taskforce composed of student officers, teacher representatives and Texas FFA Board members will study the current student delegate process.

The current process allows each chapter to send a number of delegates allocated on membership in increments of 50. The delegates cast votes in the officer election, talent competition and convention business session. Recent history suggests many of the delegates do not possess the knowledge and skills to participate effectively. Feedback suggests many chapters relegate delegate floor duties to younger, less experienced members, allowing upperclassmen to roam the convention, unfettered by delegate responsibilities. There is also a body of evidence that indicates that the state convention business session is the first and only business session in which some members participate since many districts and areas are not providing opportunities for members to conduct the business of those recognized organizational units.

The taskforce will study delegate duties described in the association's governing documents and consider strategies for elevating the status of convention voting delegates, creating a positive learning and leadership development experience and to ensure the student voice is effectively heard in the conduct of the association's affairs.





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Advocacy - Leadership ad•vo•ca•cy the act of pleading for, supporting, or recommending

Aaron Alejandro, Texas FFA Foundation Executive Director

Is it the public doesn't understand agricultural science education / FFA, or is it we don't understand all of the messages, distractions and clutter which may be causing us not to be heard? We have a story to tell. It is a dynamic story of an educational program and organization that is just as much part of the fabric of the Lone Star State as beef and the Alamo. Whether it be corporate board rooms or legislative sessions, we continue to face a public that doesn't quite understand what we do – not just cows, plows, horses and sows. So, whose responsibility is it to "tell our story?"

Some may argue that telling "our story" is the responsibility of our parent organizations in Austin. The FFA, VATAT and Foundation should be charged with that task – that's what they are being paid to do. Really? Three voices telling the story in Texas versus 1,600 local programs which include the families, community leaders and resources at the local level. If we want to be seen as relevant, we need to make ourselves relevant year-round. So what is being done at the state and local level to be an "advocate" and "leader" for agriculture, agricultural education and the FFA? What's at stake?

Bill Gates once predicted, "In three years, every product my company makes will be obsolete. The only question is whether we'll make them obsolete or somebody else will." Could we say the same about our agricultural education / Texas FFA? Are we going to be obsolete? I don't believe so, but we must engage and use our "tools" to "tell our story." Here's some information we need to recognize about how competitive the "story" market really is.

- 50% of the worlds' population is under the age of 30.
- If Facebook were a country, it would be the third largest country in the world.
- "We don't have a choice on whether to do social media; the question is how well do we do it?" Erik Qualman (Socialnomics)
- 90% of consumers trust peer recommendations only 14% trust advertisements.
- If Wikipedia were a book, it would be 2.25 million pages long and take 123 years to read.
- Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber, and Britney Spears have more followers on Twitter than the entire populations of Sweden,

Israel, Greece, Chile, North Korea or Australia.

We've got tools you can use on the local chapter level to help "tell our story" and compete for the minds of the public. We are proud to offer: MyTexasFFA.Org, the Texas FFA Network (TFN) and Texas Proud of Texas Agriculture. We hope your chapter will use these important tools to reach our communities with a message of Texas agriculture education and the Texas FFA. We want you too to become an advocate.

"United We Stand ... Divided We're Stuck" the Texas FFA Network – individual chapter website(s) are a way for individual chapters to communicate with their community, share downloadable information, and "tell the local story." Please encourage chapters in your area, if they have not already done so, to sign up for a free website and use it to communicate with their local community. Here's a few ideas on how the site could be used.

- Makes a great SAE for a student who is good with computers and may not be able to afford an animal project.
- Use in conjunction with Google Alerts to recognize and promote school and community business leaders and supporters.
- Create pages (you can have as many as you like) for each member of your chapter. Then create varying sizes of "online promotions" for local chapter sponsors. Great fundraising idea!
- Sign up for a local FFA chapter website here: http://www.google.com/support/alerts/bin/static.py?hl=en&page=guide.cs&guide=28413&rd=1.
- Use the TFN tutorial page to answer any questions on how to upload photos, edit pages or create downloads. Access the tutorial page here: http://tfn.texasffa.org/tutorials.aspx.

The Texas FFA Foundation is proud to assist Texas agricultural educators and FFA members with tools to assist in telling the story. Share the MYTEXASFFA.ORG website with chapter members, family, friends and your community. Let them hear from peers. Use a Texas FFA chapter website on the Texas FFA Network (TFN) to communicate with your community. Plug into the Texas Proud of Texas Agriculture to engage with information our Texas communities need to know about the importance of our vital industry.



From the President's Pen

Janet Bulger, Texas Young Farmers President

As I write this article, my heart is heavy with sorrow and concern for all of those who have been hit by the fires. I cannot begin to imagine what it must be like to see a fire coming toward your house and know there is absolutely nothing you can do but leave. As I think about these families, I wonder what I would take if I was in that situation. Would I take clothes, pictures or my computer that has my pictures? Unfortunately, many of the families didn't have time to take anything except the clothes on their backs.

Earlier, I was listening to the news and they said 19 new fires started today, 785 homes have burned in the Bastrop area since Monday and Texas has spent over \$61 million dealing with fires since the first of June. With our state and country already suffering from such financial difficulties, I have to wonder how much more we can handle.

I feel guilty being excited about the convention this coming January with so many in our great state suffering right now. This convention seems pretty minor stuff compared to the devastation occurring, but I do need to talk about.

Awards applications are due by November 1, 2011. Please get online and fill out these awards applications. You can find all the information, if you go to our webpage.

We are in the process of making arrangements for some pretty awesome tours on Friday, January 13. We have two tours pretty well secured, and we have secured the Texas Agricultural Education and Heritage Center, better known as the Big Red Barn, in Seguin, Texas for a tour and dinner Friday night. Go online and check it out. It is going to be a

great tour, and I expect we will have a great meal. Gonzales Young Farmers will be cooking ribeyes, baked potatoes and salad. Joyce Kirby and Area VI will be preparing the dessert. Fairfield Young Farmers will be providing table decorations, tea and ice. If your chapter would like to donate to this event, please contact me. I know this is going to be a great meal and a great time.

The Mission of the Heritage Center is to educate the public and young people about the importance of agriculture in our society and to promote the heritage of farming and ranching in Texas. I know you will not want to miss this.

TXYF UPDATES

- The Young Farmer Board members met on August 27 in Austin. Friday night Don Beene, Connie Koopmann and myself met with Aaron Alejandro, Executive Director of the FFA Foundation and Barney McClure, Executive Director of VATAT, to talk about strategies to help our organization grow. Aaron is such an uplifting speaker. I left that meeting full of enthusiasm for our organization. Aaron met with the board Saturday morning outlining some of the ideas he had.
- Facebook This is a great way to communicate with other Young Farmer chapters. If your chapter does not already have a Facebook page, get one set-up. You will be glad you did. You can show pictures and post things your chapter is doing, and you can also read about what other chapters are doing. Texas Young Farmers has a Facebook page. Like us on Facebook, and watch for news and updates!



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TEXAS HAY HOTLINE

Commissioner Todd Staples has launched a newly updated Hay Hotline to find forage. This service, which connects ranchers who need hay to those who have it, is now being updated to include prices and sources for donated hay. The Hay Hotline also connects ranchers with transportation services to deliver hay and available grazing lands.

A letter was sent by Commissioner Staples to all commissioners, secretaries and directors of agriculture in other states requesting assistance in locating hay donations for Texas ranchers. He also requested available grazing land or hay be listed on the Texas Hay Hotline.

Commissioner Staples also requested his colleagues to follow the our state in waiving transportation size restrictions for hay shipments in ways that continue to protect public safety.

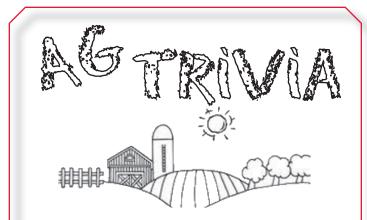
Did You Know?

- The 2010 area cotton crop generated \$2 billion from cotton lint at the farm level and \$344 million in cottonseed.
- The South Plains produces 66% of the Texas cotton crop, 30% of the U.S. cotton and almost 5% of the entire world's cotton.
- More than 3.5 million acres of cotton are planted every year in the Lubbock area. That is more than 400,000 acres larger than the state of Connecticut!
- The South Plains produces, on average, about 4.25 million bales of cotton annually. That's enough to make almost a billion pairs of jeans, or 1,738 billion men's sports shirts!
- Lubbock is home of the largest cotton seed cooperative serving the southern United States.
- In 2010, more than 160,000 acres of peanuts were planted in Texas, and more than 70% of Texas' peanut production is in West Texas.
- The South Plains has prime environmental conditions for growing crops such as poinsettias, chile peppers and grapes.
- 70% of cattle fed in Texas can be found in Lubbock feed lots
- Floydada, located about 45 miles northeast of Lubbock, is known as the "Pumpkin Capital of the USA." Pumpkin farmers there produce hundreds of thousands of pumpkins each year.
- Texas ranks 3rd in U.S. agriculture exports with exports valued at \$3.5 billion annually.



Dates to Remember

- October 29, 2011 YF Fall Board Meeting TBA
- November 1, 2011 Awards Applications Due
- December 7-10, 2011 National YF Institute Kansas City, MO
- January 13-14, 2012 YF State Convention Austin, TX
- December 4-7, 2013 National YF Institute San Antonio, TX



True or False?

- 1. Producers in the Lubbock area generate more than 30% of total agricultural production in Texas.
- 2. Agriculture generates \$73 billion annually throughout the Texas economy.
- 3. One of every seven working Texans work in an agriculture-related industry.
- 4. Food, horticulture and fiber is the second largest industry in Texas.
- 5. Peanut growers in Texas harvest enough peanuts in a year to make about six billion peanut butter sandwiches.

Answers from last month's trivia: 1. 7 2. Yogurt 3. 12 4. Pepper and Cumin

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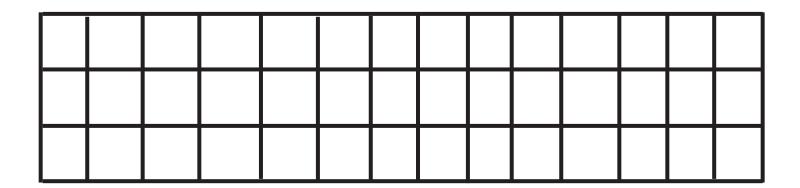
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You may also purchase your brick with a credit card through VATAT Online. For more information about the brick campaign please contact Gerald Young at 512.472.3128 or gerald@vatat.org. Don't miss out on this great opportunity!

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Texas FFA Alumni



Communication

Kelly White, Texas FFA Alumni President

The old joke stated, "There are three forms of communication: Telegraph, Telephone and Tell-a-Woman." First, I apologize to those who found this offensive. Note, I stated that it was an old joke. Communication has changed over the years. History tells us about individuals communicating through drums, smoke signals, the Pony Express and by telegraph. How many of you reading this article remember the telephone party line? Some of you reading this have always had an email address. Some, like me, remember the first time you experienced cutting on a computer and then later venturing out on the World Wide Web. Communication has changed.

We have changed the way we advertise, disburse information, communicate with friends, and many other forms of communication we used to do through the U.S. Postal Service. One of the things we have changed is how we collect Alumni membership information. The National FFA Alumni Association is in the final push to collect information on local FFA Alumni membership contacts, so they can be granted administrative rights in their new online membership system, the Agricultural Career Network. I sent this information to the contacts who have been listed in your local alumni affiliate database. Only 20 affiliates responded to this new method of registering your members. Several Alumni Affiliates contacted the state office requesting their roster because the contact information national has listed belongs to someone no longer involved in your program. Therefore, in this case, I suggest the advisor be the contact for this process and distribute it to the local representative. This insures you get your dues in on time and your affiliate can be eligible for awards, grants and scholarships.

Yes, communication has changed and a majority of us have accepted this change, while others are slowly catching on. People like my 102-year-old grandmother may never get a Facebook account, so I will continue send cards and call her on the telephone. In the meantime, keep communicating with your group and keep the Alumni growing.

We have several support groups claiming to be affiliated with the Alumni. Call your group a "Booster Club," "Friends of the FFA," or whatever, but you are not an Alumni Chapter/Affiliate, if you are not paying state and national dues.



Based on last year's membership, the Texas FFA Alumni will be recognized again at the 40th Annual Alumni Convention in its "Star System" Membership Award with the "3 Stars + Blue Blazer Award." Because we had an increase of 100 or more members, we saw a 10% in growth; we have been allotted 11 delegates to the convention; and we will receive a rebate of \$610.00.

Email me at kwhite@del-valle.k12.tx.us to brag about your Alumni Affiliate. I will be glad to include it in an article. For more information, check us out at: http://texasffaalumni.ffanow.org and like us on Facebook!



Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas

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TEXAS AG ED FAMILY EVENTS

OCTOBER 2011

1st - San Antonio Scramble Apps. Due to San Antonio

1st - Houston Scramble Apps. Posted on Web

7th - Late Swine Tag Order Begins, Austin

7th - 15th - Heart of Texas Fair, Waco

11th - Agriculture Awareness Day (State Fair Youth Leadership Day), Dallas **11th** - State Fair of Texas Public Speaking Contest, Dallas

11th - State Fair of Texas AgriScience Fair, Dallas

11th - State Fair of TexasAg Mechanics and TractorTechnician, Dallas

17th - 21st - National FFA Convention, Indianapolis, IN.

23rd - State Fair of Texas Ends, Dallas

NOVEMBER 2011

1st - Fall Semester FFA Dues Deadline - Austin

5th - AggieFest Judging

5th - Equine Judging Workshop - Texas A&M, College Station

9th - Late Swine Tag Order Ends - Austin

10th -**16th** - Late Priority Swine Tag Order, Fax Only -Austin

Swine Validation: Fall '11 & Spring '12

Early tag orders from September 6 - October 7, 2011 are \$8.00. Late tag orders from October 8 - November 9, 2011 are \$11.00. Late orders placed between November 10 - November 16 *must be faxed in only*. Each tag is \$11.00 plus \$20.00 priority postage and handing fee. *Note: There will be no tags mailed out after November 17, no exceptions.*

All official validation and tagging will occur up to and including November 30, 2011. All completed materials must be returned to the FFA office postmarked on or before December 7, 2011. Ear notch corrections must be in the office by December 28, 2011.

Ear Tag Replacement forms must be in the office on or before December 28, 2011. After this date, please complete the Ear Tag Replacement form and hand deliver it at the show. The replacement tags will be \$11.00. Only one person from each county can order swine tags!

- · Visit www.texasffa.org.
- Select the tab titled "Resources."
- Go under the "Teacher/Advisor" section.
- Select "Major Show Validation."

Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas

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