

Winter 2023

Vision



of Virginia



Member Feature pg. __

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Stand and Deliver

By: Jill Reiter, 2022-2023 State Vice President

This past year was one filled with many new opportunities and events for Virginia FFA members. One of the exciting, new events that took place this year was a Public Speaking Tour across the state during November 16-18.

The Virginia FFA Association invited Mr. Rhett Laubach, a professional speaker, leadership trainer, and former FFA member to facilitate his "Stand and Deliver" workshop for approximately 500 members across the state. The group made stops in Pittsylvania County, Carroll County, Augusta County, Frederick County, and Caroline County.

Members that attended the workshop learned about the necessary skills to be a confident public speaker. They learned how to overcome their fears of public speaking and learned tips to control their nerves before and during a speech.

Members were able to work with a partner for several interactive experiences during the workshop. In addition to learning speaking skills, students learned how to write a speech for competitions. They learned how to pick a topic they were passionate about and how to develop it into a well written speech. Members from across the state were able to step out of their comfort zones and have fun while learning about how to grow as public speakers.

Virginia FFA would like to thank Mr. Rhett Laubach for facilitating his workshop and all of the members that attended and represented Virginia FFA well. Additionally, thank you to all of the donors and sponsors who made this opportunity possible for members across the state!



Rolling Out the Blue Carpet

By: Savannah Goodwin, 2022-2023 State Reporter

On December 9th, the first inaugural Blue Carpet Gala was held at Frieden Farms in Mount Crawford, Virginia. Past and present members, friends, and supporters of Virginia FFA came together from across the state to raise over \$100,000 dollars for the Virginia FFA Foundation. Among those guests was Past State FFA President and Virginia FFA Foundation Board Member, MaKayla Craig who described being pleasantly surprised upon walking into the venue by the large turnout of supporters. "It is hard to put into words how amazing it was to see so many individuals, businesses, and industry leaders rally for Virginia FFA," said Craig.

Guests were encouraged to bring their past FFA jackets to hang over the backs of their chairs, creating a sea of corduroy blue for everyone to enjoy throughout the evening. Attendees were greeted with a cocktail hour, followed by dinner and a live auction. State President, Emily Jenkins, gave welcoming remarks and State Secretary, Makenna Garrett, told the story of her blue jacket and the opportunities that the blue corduroy gives to every FFA member. When asked why the Gala was impactful to Virginia FFA, Craig said, "Ultimately the goal of the Virginia FFA Foundation is to support all Virginia FFA members, agricultural educators, and the Virginia FFA Association as a whole. Events such as the Gala bring together a group of individuals who know firsthand the positive impact that FFA can have on an individual."

Following dinner, the live auction began and included everything from historical paintings to floral arrangements, and even a dinner with past Virginia and National advisor Dr. Larry Case. After the conclusion of the auction, guests were invited to dance and mingle for the remainder of the night. Craig said her favorite parts of the evening were the opportunity to see old friends, make new connections, and being surrounded by a room full of individuals who love and support the Virginia FFA Association. Thank you to all of those who were in attendance and a big thank you to our donors who support our members across the state!



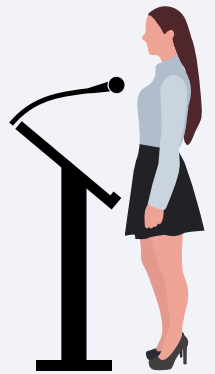


Checking In with Checkpoint Two

By: Carly Thomas, 2022-2023 State Treasurer

The best leaders are those who constantly seek to improve and grow both personally and professionally. That is exactly what the State Officer Team was up to February 2nd-4th while completing their Checkpoint Two training through the National FFA State Officer Program! Reunited with their facilitator, Rodrigo Ramirez-Perez, the team spent a few days learning more about team dynamics, effective communication, and exploring public speaking skills that will help them in writing banquet speeches and their Retiring Addresses for this year's State Convention.

When asked about Checkpoint Two, Vice President Elizabeth Bates said, "Overall it made for a great weekend! It was very special having everyone travel to my home town of Culpeper. I really enjoyed our training and continuing our connections as a team! These are special moments where we can all sit down together and continue to grow as leaders. I think I can speak for everyone when we say we are looking forward to making this second half of our year even better than the first!" Overall, the team had an amazing time learning and growing together to better serve our members!



— “ —
Leadership is not an expertise.

Leadership is a constant education.

” —
-Simon Sinek



Networking at the Farm Bureau Expo

By: Jordan Petrie, 2022-2023 State Vice President

On November 28th, the 2022-2023 State Officer Team made the trip to The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia for the Annual Virginia Farm Bureau Convention. While at the convention the State Officer Team mainly spent their time at the Virginia FFA booth in the expo hall. Through this, they had the opportunity to talk to former FFA members, current sponsors and donors to Virginia FFA, and meet the new director of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Mike Gutter.

Andrew Seibel, the 2022-2023 National FFA President, had the opportunity to speak at the convention about how the Virginia Farm Bureau has positively impacted his journey in FFA. Attendees also had the opportunity to hear from Tanner Wise, an FFA member at Buckingham County High School. Tanner talked about how young agriculturalists can impact their community, find successes in agriculture, and how programs such as FFA, 4-H, and Cooperative Extension have positive impacts on youth and their surrounding communities.

The convention wrapped up for the State Officers after hearing a speech from Governor Youngkin about his plans for creating a lasting positive impact on Virginia agriculture. The Virginia FFA Association is extremely grateful to the Virginia Farm Bureau for their continuous support of Virginia FFA!

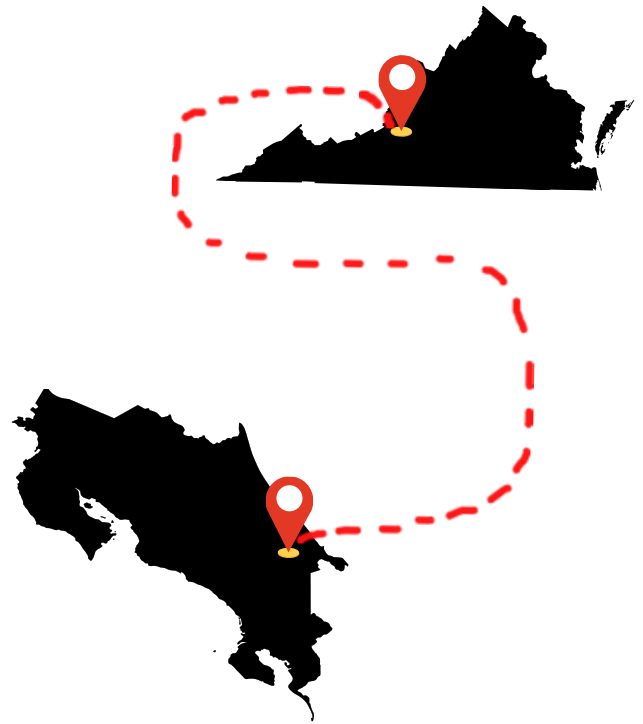


The State Officer Team pictured with the Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Matt Lohr (top); Dana Fisher (middle); and members of the Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers Committee (bottom).

Exploring International Agriculture

By: Gabriella Martin, 2022-2023 State Vice President

On January 2nd, the Virginia State Officer team set off to their International Leadership Seminar with the National FFA Organization. There were 75 State Officers from 25 different states that attended the trip. The trip lasted 10 days in **Costa Rica**. From San José to the Central Pacific area they toured farms, plantations, and other agricultural facilities to learn about the agriculture in a different country and the contrasts in operations and facilities. The first tour began at the headquarters of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA). There the U.S. Embassy's FAS Staff gave a briefing on their facility and then allowed us to tour their garden. After that, the state officers went to a museum to learn about the **history and culture** of Costa Rica. The next day they traveled to Turrialba to tour CATIE, which is the Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education System. There they saw the botanical garden, international crop collections, and the milk station with low carbon cows.

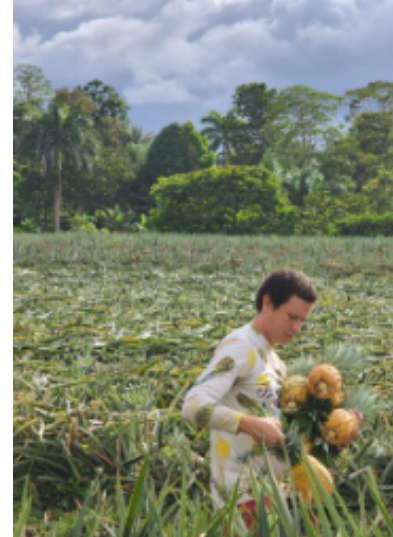


On the 3rd day the group visited Tibas Farmers Market where they were able to purchase local fruits and vegetables from the farmers. The next stop was La Paz Waterfall Gardens. The following day they traveled to the Sarapiquí area and toured a pineapple plantation. At the plantation they learned about how pineapples are produced and made to grow at a certain time without any chemicals. On day 5 they visited Proyecto Axis and the Agriculture and Industrial Technical School (ETAI). Proyecto Axis is a wildlife reserve center. There the group helped to clean the enclosures and made environmental enrichment toys for the animals' food to go in. At ETAI, the team was able to see what the Technical School offered to students through hands-on learning. On the next day, they toured the organic farm of Sr. Don Juan. At the farm they were able to taste and smell different plants and learned the plant's uses. From natural insect repellent to food dyes they were able to see how certain plants could benefit locals. The next tour was a rainforest chocolate tour. This tour showed them the process of making chocolate from the Cacao plant and explained the history of chocolate.

Day 7 led to the Mistico Arenal Hanging Bridges Park where FFA State Officers hiked and crossed 15 bridges. The park is a reserve for nature and the hundreds of species that live there. After the hike they were able to visit Ecotermales Fortuna's hot springs. The hot springs were built by the Hidalgo family and the water flows through each of the five springs and back out into the river. The next day began with the Jungle Crocodile Safari and Bird Watching tour. Here they were able to see 20 different species of birds, screech monkeys, iguanas, and several crocodiles. After that tour, they headed to the Pacific coast and the white sand beaches.



Hacienda Sur Cattle Ranch was the first stop on day 9. Here the owner taught them about his operation and genetics to produce Artisan beef. He uses Red Angus genetics from Montana and Wagyu from Japan to cross with his Brahman. They use dry aging for their beef and only feed grass. After visiting the cattle ranch the next stop was Villa Vanilla Spice Plantation. At this plantation there are many different cash crops on the farm. Some of the spices they have besides Vanilla are Black pepper, true ceylon cinnamon, allspice, and turmeric. They also have exotic fruits, essential oils, medicine plants, and epiphytes. On the last day the team visited Doka Estate, to learn how coffee is made. They showed how the beans are grown, harvested, and then roasted to add the flavor of coffee. The longer the roast the darker the coffee will be.



During the trip the State Officers learned what it means to be a good host to everyone you meet. They built friendships and connections with state officers from 25 different states and even made connections with locals in Costa Rica. This trip helped them gain knowledge of agriculture in a different country while learning a new culture and trying new foods. It is important to always branch out and try new things when they can lead to wonderful opportunities. Costa Ricans use the phrase pura vida to say hello, goodbye, how are you, the food is amazing, and I'm doing great. The term's actual definition means, 'pure life.' They use this phrase as a way to live when life gets you upside down you just have to go with the flow. They believe you shouldn't be upset over the things you cannot change, so you get up and say pura vida instead! The State Officers made memories they will never forget and learned so much. You can say the trip was pura vida for them!



Pura, Vida!



Indianapolis Flooded by a Sea of Blue

By: Emily Jenkins, 2022-2023 State President & Makenna Garrett, 2022-2023 State Secretary



ANDREW SEIBEL ELECTED AS THE 2022-2023 NATIONAL FFA PRESIDENT



The 95th Annual National FFA Convention and Expo was held October 25th-30th, 2022 in Indianapolis, Indiana. A week where over 69,500 members and attendees from across the nation flooded the streets of Indianapolis creating the sea of blue jackets we know and love. Members compete in a variety of activities and events, such as many Leadership Development Events and Career Development Events.

Outside of the contests, there are many other opportunities and events for attendees to enjoy throughout the week such as workshops for students and teachers, concerts, the expo, the FFA shopping mall, and keynote speakers. This year's keynote speakers included Tamika Catchings and Coty Back. Tamika Catchings is the founder of Catch the Stars foundation which empowers youth by providing goal-setting programs that promote fitness, literacy, and youth development. Coty Back is a leadership multiplier, facilitator, and past State and National FFA Officer. Attendees enjoyed listening to their empowering words.

This year's expo featured exhibits from agricultural companies and organizations, as well as hands-on learning opportunities and demonstrations. In attendance were also colleges from across the United States promoting their programs! The National FFA Convention and Expo is a time for FFA members to celebrate their achievements, learn about new opportunities in agriculture and leadership, and network with others interested in these areas. With performances throughout the week showcasing beautiful melodies and amazing solos from the National FFA chorus and band, members also enjoyed 7 general sessions to honor and celebrate all of their hard work throughout the past year.



Some of Virginia's members also had the opportunity to attend the concerts and sang along to artists such as Lauren Alana, Jimmy Allen, Mickey Guyton, and Russell Dickerson. Others attended the action-packed rodeos and could even get up close to sit on a bull. While FFA members, family members and friends cheered as American Degree candidates were awarded to many members from the state of Virginia.

During the convention, the 2022-2023 Virginia State Officer team served as delegates for the National FFA delegate process. This process began in July at the State officer Summit in Washington DC. Countless hours of conversations and collaborations lead up to this week, as State Officers and delegates from across the country worked hard to make recommendations for the National FFA Board of Directors to make sure that FFA members' voices were heard.

At the final session, Andrew Seibel was elected to serve as the 2022-2023 National FFA President. We would like to congratulate and thank Andrew for his dedication to this organization! We can not wait to see where this year will take you and what you will accomplish for the organization. From all of Virginia FFA: Congratulations, Andrew!

The 95th Annual National FFA Convention and Expo celebrated the diverse range of FFA members and their interests, accomplishments, and experiences. A lifetime of friendships and memories were made and we can't wait until next year to be a part of the sea of blue filling Indy!



95TH NATIONAL CONVENTION RESULTS

CDE/LDE Gold Individuals

Employment Skills

Grace Walbroehl
Culpeper

Environment and
Natural Resources

Benjamin Walters
Central

Dairy Handlers

Sarah Craun
Massanutten Technical
Center

Farm and Agribusiness
Management

Herschel Hoffeditz
Broadway

Floriculture

Allison Ratliff
John S. Battle

Livestock Judging

Emily Taylor
Rural Retreat

Meats Evaluation &
Technology

Katie Powell
Nelson County

Milk Quality &
Products

Eleana Vincent
Clarke County

Veterinary Science

Anna Grohs
Liberty



Proficiency -
Dairy Production, Ent.
National Finalist
Rachel Craun
Massanutten Technical Center



Proficiency -
Poultry Production
National Winner
Jackson Lohr
Broadway

Agriscience Fair

Animal Systems, Division 1
3rd Place

Nathan Paris
Chatham Middle

Social Systems, Division 3
9th Place

Audrey Garrison
Turner Ashby

Plant Systems, Division 6
4th Place

**Jadyn Smith &
Camrey McMillan**
Carroll County

National Chapter Awards

3 Star

Appomattox Senior

Broadway

C.L. Payne

Carroll County Middle

Central

Liberty

Sherando

Signal Knob Middle

Tunstall High

Wilson Middle

2 Star

Carroll County

Clarke County

Fauquier

Liberty Bedford Middle

Pulaski County

S. Gordon Stewart Middle

Smith Mountain

Wilson Memorial

1 Star

Abingdon

Charlotte Central Middle

Kettle Run

Stuarts Draft

National Band

Gary Vance
Clarke County

National Chorus

Kirin Miller
Clarke County

National Talent

Semi-Finalist

Katie Stang
Clarke County

American Degree Recipients

Darcey Bennett

Abigail Bryant

Hannah Burton

Jacob Grant Coffey

Megan Conley

Paul Craun

Harleigh Cupp

Branson Custer

Stacy Doss

James Eaton

Shaylynn L. Elick

Grace Fravel

Bethany Gentry

Hannah Goldman

Josh Hartley

Matthew Hartley

Emma Rose Jackson

Daniel Joseph Judy

Sammy Leach

Devin Lee Letterman

Jackson Lohr

Cora Meredith

Heidi Messerley

Kacie Miller

Logan Miller

Elijah Moore

Charles Samuel Moser

Makayla Newman

Kevin Painchaud

Joshua Powers

Kate Lucille Pugh

Emily Rexrode

Lauren Rhodes

Jack Rodgers

Charles Shepley

Ava Showalter

Stephanie Staats

Cheyenne S. Stimpson

Makayla Renee Talley

Erin Raye Tate

Jason Thomas Teter

Baylee Nicole Toothman

Danielle Rose Tuck

Ellie Vance

Joel Witt

Felicity Zimmerman

Lindsay Michelle Zirkle

Honorary American Degree Recipients

Cynthia Blaha

Barry Gray

Michael Carter

Ben Smith

Tammy Cole

Roland Terrell

Thomas "Ted" DeLano

IT JUST MAKES "CENTS"



By: Elizabeth Bates, 2022-2023 State Vice President

During the month of December, several members of the 2022-2023 Virginia FFA State Officer Team attended "The Farm Finance and Conservation Planning Seminar". This free event was held in partnership by Virginia Secretary of Agriculture, Matt Lohr alongside various state and federal lending establishments and agencies. The seminars were held on December 8th at the Meadow Event Park in Doswell, and on December 16th at Blue Ridge Community College in Weyers Cave. The seminar was targeted to beginning farmers and focused on farm financing resources and cost share conservation opportunities.



When asked about this event, 2022-2023 Virginia FFA State Sentinel, Katie Powell said, "Secretary Lohr put on a wonderful program with so many amazing resources for the producers in attendance. As someone who does not come from a farming background, but is interested in producing in the future, the presentations gave me all of the tools and resources that I would need to be successful". Virginia FFA would like to thank Matt Lohr and the numerous sponsors of this educational event. These opportunities for new and beginning members in the agriculture industry is a key to having a successful operation on both the state and local levels.



DIGGIN' DEEPER




By: Katie Powell,
2022-2023 State Sentinel

On November 8, nearly 100 eager Virginia FFA and 4-H members traveled to Engel Family Farms in Hanover, Virginia for the State Soils Contest. Upon arrival, they were faced with 4 five foot deep soil sites to analyze. Contestants spent the next few hours scratching away at the edge of the pit with soil knives, ribboning to determine the soil type, and measuring the various layers of the soil as well as the slope of the land. With the pits ranging in soil texture, slope, and land quality, teams were tasked with determining the overall use of the land. By compiling all of the information that they had gathered, they made decisions about the quality of the individual sites for certain uses, inclusive of sewer systems, basements, and particular farming practices.

After a hard day's work of judging the soil and land, the students came back together to mingle with one another over a pizza lunch courtesy of Hanover-Caroline Soil Water Conservation District. They also had the opportunity to hear from several industry professionals about future careers in soil science. These organizations included Virginia Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development. On behalf of the Virginia FFA Association, thank you to all of the event sponsors as well as Engel Family Farms for making this event possible. Congratulations to our top winning teams who will have the opportunity to travel to Oklahoma in May to compete at the National Land and Range Judging Contest!

RESULTS

JUNIOR TEAM

-  **Signal Knob Middle**
-  **Strasburg**
-  **Powhatan Middle**


JUNIOR INDIVIDUAL

-  **Hannah Baker**
-  **Sofia Tefft**
-  **Nolan Froemel**






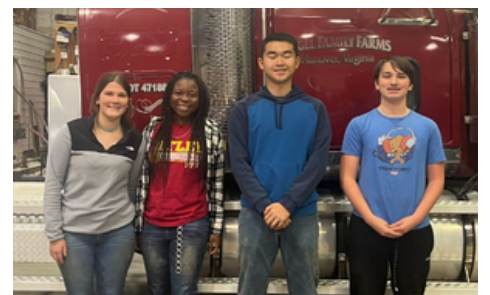
Nelson County - 1st Place Senior Team

SENIOR TEAM

-  **Nelson County**
-  **Atlee**
-  **Broadway**

SENIOR INDIVIDUAL

-  **Lillian Morgan**
-  **Houston Bryant**
-  **Raelin Bowman**



Atlee - 2nd Place Senior Team

NEW YEAR, NEW CHAPTER

By: Maddie Moore, Virginia FFA Staff Intern

Virginia FFA is excited to ring in the new year by introducing two of our newest chapters located in Orange County, Prospect Heights Middle School and Locust Grove Middle School with advisor, Mr. Andrew McWilliams. After teaching agriculture at Orange County High School for fourteen years, Mr. McWilliams was assigned a new position at both schools focused on teaching agriscience. Knowing the importance of having an FFA chapter as a part of agriculture education, Mr. McWilliams saw the opportunity to start FFA chapters at both schools.

Mr. McWilliams is looking forward to working with many eager students and getting them involved in FFA, "I have the opportunity to introduce them to agriculture and the components of agricultural education. At the middle school level the classes are referred to as exploratory and I have the opportunity to teach more students per year than at the high school." He says that students are beginning to pay their dues and become members at the state and national level; he looks forward to updating the roster as the chapters grow.

The chapters have also received a great deal of support from administrators and the students during their start up year, "Everyone at all levels have been supportive," he said. His students are anxiously waiting to compete in various contests involving small animals and livestock, as well as expressing interest in the FFA creed contest. For Mr. McWilliams, he is most excited about introducing agriculture mechanics competition to his students.



ANDREA LOHR LEGACY FUND



Today, we're focused. Our mission and cause are clear. We have a vision that is inspired and designed by those we serve, and those that serve with us every day. Our focus on deepening a culture of philanthropy and developing principled student leaders is still at the core of our work and serves as the common thread throughout the history of FFA's efforts in the commonwealth, and throughout the country. Legacy funds are crucial to providing our members with opportunities to grow as leaders for years to come. Each fund was created to honor those who have left a lasting legacy on Virginia FFA. Keep reading to learn more about one of the Legacy Funds you can give a gift to, today!

This fund was created to honor the service and passion of a woman who was a continuous servant and representation of hope, love, and faith to all she came into contact with.

Andrea Lohr developed a passion for agriculture at an early age on her family farm in Kentucky. As an active FFA member, she earned the office of 1993 Kentucky State President. Andrea taught agricultural education in Rockingham County for four years until she chose to stay home with her husband, Matt. Andrea spoke in all 50 states spreading the words of inspiration to FFA members. In 2006, Andrea was diagnosed with a rare form of breast cancer and courageously battled the disease until July 2011. To anyone who knew Andrea, her drive, passion, faith, and love for family and life were contagious. Because of this, she continued to inspire many despite her health condition. Andrea strongly believed in all that agricultural education and FFA has to offer to students. The Andrea Lohr Memorial Fund provides an annual scholarship awarded to an outstanding Virginia FFA member who demonstrates the skills, attitude, and determination to accomplish their goals despite the obstacles he/she may face.

When you support Virginia FFA, you change the lives of our future leaders. In a fast-paced world with disconnect from the farm to table, one organization has remained steadfast in its dedication to developing the next generation of leadership for our nation's pinnacle industry—agriculture. The FFA Organization is guided by the phrase - "Learning to do, doing to learn, earning to live, living to serve" and its members live out hands-on service in their daily lives. The largest youth leadership organization in the world began right here in Virginia in 1927. Won't you be a part of it today?

Visit us online at vaffafoundation.org to join us in inspiring premier leadership, personal growth, and career success for FFA members across the commonwealth!

Virginia Ag Teacher "Turns the Key" at NAAE

By: Maddie Moore, Virginia FFA Staff Intern



The National Association of Agricultural Educators Convention was held in the exciting city of Las Vegas, Nevada from November 29th through December 3rd! The bright lights lit up the street where thousands of agricultural educators from across the country gathered together to collaborate, network, and expand their professional development, knowledge, and resources to better their agriculture education programs back at home. Virginia had eleven attendees this year that took part in the nationwide conference.

Ms. Alice Cox, agricultural educator and FFA advisor at Grayson County CATE Center, won the Teachers Turn the Key Scholarship. Ms. Cox began her teaching career at Grayson CATE and has been teaching for two and a half years now. Ms. Cox first attended the NAAE Conference in 2019 in San Antonio, Texas, where she served as a NAAE Communications Intern. In this position, Ms. Cox ran the A/V equipment for sessions and enjoyed having the opportunity to see the backside of the convention and taking part in making it a great experience for all attendees.

She explained that receiving the "Teachers Turn the Key" scholarship was the affirmation she needed to know she is on the right track in her career and helping the program at Grayson County grow. "I am excited to see how the program will continue to grow as I gain more experience as an Ag Teacher," Ms. Cox explained, "There are so many ideas running through my head and I can not wait to pick which one to tackle next."

Ms. Cox has enjoyed the many opportunities to attend multiple professional development conferences with the NAAE and has seen how beneficial they truly are. "Take advantage of any opportunities for professional development that arise. You might not use the material exactly as presented, but many times you will be able to change it to work for your program."

Virginia FFA would like to congratulate Ms. Cox on this accomplishment and we wish her the best with her career and upcoming projects at Grayson CATE!



If you are an agriculture teacher and are interested in attending the 2023 NAAE Conference, please visit <https://www.vaffa.org/VAAE> for more information!

