During our time at Washington D.C. the 2023-2024 State Officer team had the pleasure of meeting with Senator Kaine, Senator Warner, Representative Cline, and Representative Spanberger to talk about this upcoming Farm Bill and other upcoming agricultural topics. With the Farm Bill being renewed every 5 years, 2023 being that year, it was a perfect opportunity for the Virginia FFA to communicate and understand where our representatives stand on the bill. It allowed us to discuss and gather thoughts on what the bill is and how it might affect us. As a younger generation of Farmers, technology has evolved and may allow us to improve on the way we do business.

The National State Officers Summit was the gathering of FFA State officers from all 50 states and Puerto Rico. It was a great showing with representatives from almost every state. It allowed us to see how agriculture is accomplished throughout our country. Giving everyone a new perspective on innovation and adversity and how to implement and overcome both. We not only were able to increase our understanding of agriculture on a larger scale but made amazing friends and connections who will most definitely be a resource we use now and in the future.
After a year of traveling to chapters, advocating for agriculture and serving all facets of the association, the 2022-2023 Virginia F.F.A. State Officer Team has completed their term. They have all had an extensive impact on the members, advisors and stakeholders during their time in office, but F.F.A. has also affected each one of them in a huge way. Let’s hear what they have to say about their year of service!

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR TIME IN SERVICE?**

“Seeing the diversity of agriculture, getting to interact with the members on a different level and having so many opportunities brought to me.”

~ Emily

“Being able to interact with the members and getting to learn about them and their experiences.”

~ Jordan

“When we got to sit down with Virginia’s First lady Suzanne Youngkin during F.F.A. Week!”

~ Elizabeth

“Spending time with F.F.A. members; getting to know members across the state and learning about their love for agriculture was definitely the highlight of the year.”

~ Jill

“Learning more about agriculture in different areas of the state through the members’ S.A.E.s.”

~ Gabriella

“Meeting people from other parts of the state that experience agriculture in a completely different way than I’ve been exposed to.”

~ Makenna

“Getting to visit schools across the state and meeting so many amazing members!”

~ Carly

“Seeing younger students experience the possibilities of our organization for the first time.”

~ Savannah

“I had the privilege of meeting members at leadership camp, chapter visits, banquets, and other fun events.”

~ Katie

*continued on page D*
On behalf of the 2022-2023 Virginia F.F.A. State Officer team, we would like to thank the members for making this a fantastic year full of opportunities for growth and memories that will last a lifetime! Now, onto the next adventure!

**WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON YOU LEARNED THIS YEAR?**

“Cherish every memory and be the best person I can be, even if I feel like I am failing at something or not doing as well as everyone else.”  ~ Emily

“It’s ok to make mistakes, but you have to be able to recover from them and be able to adapt to change.”  ~ Jordan

“Don’t measure your success only through work. Having a full life is about the positive relationships you’ve built and the joyous milestones along the way.”  ~ Elizabeth

“It is ok to not have your life 100% planned out; take the time to enjoy those moments rather than stressing about the future.”  ~ Jill

“You are capable of anything you set your mind to.”  ~ Gabriella

“Say yes to every opportunity. It’s so worth it to experience new places with new people doing something outside of your comfort zone.”  ~ Makenna

“How to be a humble servant. At the end of the day, titles do not matter – it’s who you are and how you treat others that leaves an impact.”  ~ Carly

“Rather than staying in a negative mindset about change, I found myself grateful that I had taken a leap of faith and gotten off the beaten path.”  ~ Savannah

“Take time to foster relationships with people who may have been through similar situations as you and can teach you a lot about life.”  ~ Katie

**WHAT IS A PIECE OF ADVICE YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEAVE WITH VIRGINIA’S F.F.A. MEMBERS?**

“Take those opportunities and hold tight to the memories, the moments and the sentimental items because one day you might look back and you won’t get to experience some of these things again.”  ~ Emily

“It’s ok to be yourself, don’t be afraid of what others might think about you and don’t let others’ opinions stop you from being yourself or hold you back.”  ~ Jordan

“Say ‘yes’ to every opportunity given. You never know who you will meet or the amazing places you’ll get to see!”  ~ Elizabeth

“Branch out, try new things, and always believe in yourself!”  ~ Jill

“Do not let your fears get in the way of your success.”  ~ Gabriella

“Take advantage of the opportunities around you and be confident in your ability to do something outside of your comfort zone!”  ~ Makenna

“Love others, be a friend to all, and always be the first to lend a helping hand to those around you.”  ~ Katie

“Be kind, always. You’ll never know the true depth of your light and how it may be paid forward.”  ~ Carly

“Whether it’s talking to new people at an area event or trying out a new contest, it’s important to soak up every moment that you have in this organization.”  ~ Savannah

On behalf of the 2022-2023 Virginia F.F.A. State Officer team, we would like to thank the members for making this a fantastic year full of opportunities for growth and memories that will last a lifetime! Now, onto the next adventure!
LEARN ABOUT OUR New Leaders

by Stacy Doss – VA FFA Intern

In June, a new slate of state officers was selected to serve as leaders for Virginia FFA for 2023-2024! We had the chance to catch up with them and learn a little more about their FFA stories.

Question Guide
1. What is your favorite part about your S.A.E. project?
2. How did you first learn about and join FFA?
3. What are your favorite hobbies outside of FFA?

President: Kelcey Weston

1. Working with horses is my favorite part about my SAE. I have fallen in love with the process of getting new rescues at the barn and watching them grow throughout their training. Seeing their progress is one of the most rewarding things I have experienced.
2. My dad and uncle were both active members of the FFA throughout their high school careers. Simply knowing how much they enjoyed their FFA experience was enough to persuade me to become a member. While I had heard their stories about the organization, I had no idea how much of an impact it would end up making on my life.
3. For the past 15 years of my life, I have been a competitive dancer. I have trained in the styles of lyrical, jazz, modern, tap, hip-hop, contemporary, pointe, and ballet. Dance has always been a huge outlet for me and a great way to express my feelings.

Secretary: Grace Walbroehl

1. My favorite part of my SAE project is that I get to work with my hands on restoring a tractor, while also building skills that will help me for my career. Learning how to work on equipment and working with my hands is always fun and good for me to learn.
2. When I was in 8th grade, I took my first Ag class after watching my brother have so much fun in his Ag classes. He was an FFA member, and he would come home and tell us about how much fun he had doing a contest or going on a trip, and I thought that seemed like so much fun. So, I joined in 8th grade and have loved it since.
3. My favorite hobby outside of FFA is definitely working on my own project truck, and tractors. For example, I have a GMC pickup that I have been working on for a few months, and it is so much fun to work on and get the truck to where I want it to be. I also love to go fishing also, usually I like to go bass fishing, but I am trying to branch out more!

Vice President: Nate Zerkel

1. My absolute favorite part of my S.A.E. project, being a milk hand on a dairy farm, is the friendship and connections I’ve been able to make through my boss. Since starting to work there in November 2022, I’ve been able to judge a 4-H contest, attend the 2023 Young Farmers Winter Expo., and develop a lifelong friendship with my boss and mentor.
2. When I was in eighth grade, two of my friends encouraged me to join because of how much fun they were having in Parliamentary Procedure. I switched my elective to the agriculture class and fell in love with it! I joined again in high school, and since then have been able to find my passion and participate in so many things I never would have if not for FFA.
3. My biggest hobby is definitely music! I sing, play the acoustic guitar, bass guitar, ukulele, and keyboard, and even write my own songs. I’ve had the opportunity to get one of my songs recorded by winning a songwriting contest, been in bands and choirs, and even was in the National FFA Chorus last year!

Vice President: Kirin Miller
1. My favorite part about my SAE is being able to talk to the local farmers! Learning about what makes each of their farms unique is the most interesting part of my job. It helps to give me a different perspective on what hard work and success mean to different people.

2. My school hadn’t had an active FFA chapter in the past 30-40 years, until my sophomore year of high school. One day, I received an email about an upcoming flower competition. I love flowers, so I figured I should look into it. Before that day, I had never even set foot in my school’s shop! A few weeks later, the ag teacher ended up encouraging me to run for an officer position. Even though I didn’t have any previous FFA experience, I decided to do it anyway. Back then, I never would have thought that I would end up as a Virginia FFA State Officer, I didn’t even know what that was… But since that day, the rest is history, and four years later, here I am!

3. My favorite hobby outside of FFA is definitely going to be shopping. I am the definition of a shopaholic, which also comes with being a workaholic because unfortunately, money doesn’t grow on trees (as I’ve come to find out). While juggling four jobs, I’ve become a professional online shopper. Some of my less expensive hobbies include any and all river activities. You name it, I’ve probably done it… Perks of living on the Northern Neck!

1. My favorite part of my SAE project was getting to hand out my homemade pies to the families and watch their reaction. The joy it brought the families to have a homemade pie and be able to enjoy local produce was fantastic and something I will remember forever.

2. My little sister was actually a part of FFA before I was, and went on a field trip to an auction with her Ag class. She then proceeded to call me and ask if I would not tell my parents that she was buying a show pig and asked if I would be willing to split the cost with her and it be our pet pig. I agreed to split the cost if I could name our pig Porkahauntis, she agreed and bought the pig in the middle of her field trip. When she brought the pig home, she opened the front door and walked it into the kitchen and my parents eventually accepted the fact that we now had a pig. After that day I knew FFA was going to be amazing and so much fun, and I wouldn’t have changed it for the world.

3. Outside of FFA I am involved in a lot of things. Some of my favorites are being the sportscaster for my high school at all their sporting events, I love to dance and have been dancing since I was 4, and baking. I bake lots of different things but mainly cookies. I am also an avid reader. I love to read and am constantly spending too much money on books I found on Tik Tok.

1. My favorite part of my SAE project was getting to drive my 1954 Ford NAA tractor in parades, and most recently in the 4th of July parade. The tractor was my great grandfathers, and I was able to get it running to drive in parades.

2. Both of my parents are or have been FFA advisors so my whole life I have been around FFA, and I attended my first state convention when I was just 6 months old so when I got to middle school, I couldn’t wait to join the FFA. Through the FFA I have learned many life skills that I will use in everyday life.

3. My favorite hobby outside of FFA is hunting and fishing. I love being in the great outdoors and enjoying nature. I do most of my fishing in Douthat State Park for trout, bluegill, and perch and I hunt on land my family owns in Shenandoah County.
The 97th Annual Virginia State Convention was held on June 20-23. This year Virginia Tech’s campus welcomed over 2,000 members, advisors, special guests, and chaperones. Students came from every corner of Virginia for members to compete in over 30 CDEs and LDEs. For the first time in 97 years the Virginia State Convention had the honor of hosting Mrs. Suzanne Youngkin, the First Lady of Virginia. Our convention was also joined by Andrew Seibel, the 2022-2023 National FFA President.

Why is state convention so important? Because it is the only opportunity that members from across the entire great state of Virginia get to meet, from the tip of the state to the very bottom and from the beaches to the mountains, we all meet on common ground. The contests here are at the highest level in the state, this is where months of dedication gets to pay off. This week is where the most skilled competitors could earn a ticket to the national convention in Indianapolis, Indiana, or to the Big E in Massachusetts, where all the eastern states come together to compete.
In addition to our many competitive events, members took part in the 2nd Annual Career Expo. Here they met with industry professionals and enjoyed time learning about various careers in the agricultural field.

Our sessions were filled with excitement as we honored member accomplishments! 171 members walked across Burruss Hall stage to receive their State FFA Degree and 36 members were declared State Proficiency Winners. We also heard retiring addresses from our state officer team and heard moving and impactful keynotes from Andrew Seibel and The First Lady of Virginia, Suzanne S. Youngkin.
STATE WINNING CDE AND LDE TEAMS/INDIVIDUALS ARE...

AG COMMUNICATIONS
Team: Abingdon

AG ISSUES
Team: Central

AG MECHANICS - JUNIOR
Team: Powhatan

AG MECHANICS - SENIOR
Team: Randolph-Henry

AG SALES
Team: Randolph-Henry

AGRICIENCE FAIR - FOOD PRODUCTS AND PROCESSING SYSTEMS
Individuals: Ella Beagle and Avery Caffrey from J. Frank Hillyard

AGRICIENCE FAIR - POWER, STRUCTURAL, AND TECHNICAL SYSTEMS
Individuals: Branson Arbogast and John Haviland from J. Frank Hillyard

AGRICIENCE FAIR - SOCIAL SCIENCE
Individuals: Megan Wolfcale from Eastern View

AGRICIENCE FAIR - SOCIAL SCIENCE
Individual: Maddie Smith from Eastern View

AGRICIENCE FAIR - ANIMAL SYSTEMS
Individual: Nathan Paris from Chatham

AGRICIENCE FAIR - ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
Individual: Madisyn Corron from Eastern View

AGRONOMY - JUNIOR
Team: Charlotte Central Middle

AGRONOMY - SENIOR
Team: Appomattox

AVIAN BOWL
Team: J. Frank Hillyard

CREED
Individual: Colton Moye from Giles

DISCUSSION MEET
Individual: Courtney Begoon from Fort Defiance

EMPLOYMENT SKILLS
Individual: Ayla Janney from Broadway

ENVIRONMENTAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES
Team: Broadway

EXTemporaneous PUBLIC SPEAKING
Individual: Katie Payne from Broadway

FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
Team: Nelson Senior

FLORICULTURE
Team: John S. Battle

FOOD SCIENCE
Team: James Wood

HIPPOLOGY - JUNIOR
Team: Fort Defiance

HIPPOLOGY - SENIOR
Team: Riner
HORSE EVALUATION - JUNIOR
Team: Wilson Middle

HORSE EVALUATION - SENIOR
Team: Riner

HORTICULTURE AWARD
Team: John S. Battle

LIVESTOCK JUDGING - JUNIOR
Team: J. Frank Hillyard

LIVESTOCK JUDGING - SENIOR
Team: Massanutten Technical Center

MARKETING PLAN
Team: Strasburg

MIDDLE SCHOOL AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS AND TECHNOLOGY
Team: Wilson Middle

MIDDLE SCHOOL FOOD AND FIBER
Team: RE Aylor

MIDDLE SCHOOL PLANT SCIENCE
Team: J. Frank Hillyard

MIDDLE SCHOOL SMALL ANIMAL CARE
Team: Wilson Middle

MIDDLE SCHOOL QUIZ BOWL - WRITTEN
Team: Wilson Middle

MIDDLE SCHOOL QUIZ BOWL - ORAL
Team: J. Frank Hillyard

MIDDLE SCHOOL ESSAY WINNER
Individual: Alexis Davis from Wilson Middle

MILK QUALITY AND PRODUCTS
Team: Sherando

NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE
Team: John S. Battle

PREPARED PUBLIC SPEAKING - JUNIOR
Individual: Virginia Burton from Chatham

PREPARED PUBLIC SPEAKING - SENIOR
Individual: Rebekah Sanderson from Randolph-Henry

STAR JUNIOR CHAPTER
Team: Signal Knob

STAR SENIOR CHAPTER
Team: Central

TALENT WINNER
Individual: Leah Moore from Rappahannock

TURF GRASS MANAGEMENT
Team: Atlee

VETERINARY SCIENCE
Team: Eastern View

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#SUPPORTVAFFA #DRIVEFOR1000
State Stars

Star in Agribusiness - Daniel Heath from Clarke
Daniel’s love for antique machinery was sparked by his father and grandfather. His love for this equipment, especially Farmall tractors, led Daniel to begin restoring antiques as his SAE. His grandfather taught him all the restoration techniques he now uses. He commonly restores tractors by replacing the engine and drivetrain; as well as restoring the body. Daniel takes his machinery to steam and gas shows to exhibit in both the pageant and pulling/driving portions. After taking his newly restored machinery to a few shows, he then decides whether to keep the item or sell it to help fund more restoration projects for his SAE. Through his leadership experiences in FFA, Daniel has gained skills that assist him in making sound business decisions. After school, Daniel plans to attend community college to complete his Associate’s Degree, then transfer to complete a Bachelor’s Degree in Animal Science.

Star in Ag Placement - Houston Bryant from Nelson
Throughout his life, Houston has worked on his parents’ chestnut farm, growing and harvesting chestnuts for Virginia Chestnuts. Although his responsibilities change with the seasons, Houston’s workload is constant. His spring and summer duties consist of prepping the orchard for harvest, while he spends September through November harvesting and processing chestnuts. The cycle starts over again once he begins germinating trees in December, some of which are sold through their nursery while others are planted back into the orchard. Through his leadership experiences in FFA, Houston has gained valuable knowledge and skills that help him strategize and make decisions for the future of the orchard. Houston’s role within the family business has expanded as he has gotten older. He now plays a much larger part in the business, helping parents make decisions that impact the orchard. Houston plans on going to college to receive a Bachelor’s Degree in Engineering.

Star in Agriscience - Georges Saison from Rappahannock
Interested in learning more about the impact vernal pools have on the ecosystem, Georges began volunteering at his local National Wildlife Refuge when he was 11. He is the youngest volunteer to have served as a vernal pool researcher of the Rappahannock Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Georges is responsible for looking after multiple vernal pools, observing biomasses, recording pH levels, and recording the wind velocity in the area. His leadership experiences in FFA have contributed to him having an inquisitive mind and being able to advocate for the importance of vernal pools and the impact they have on the ecosystem.

Star Farmer - Blake Caricofe from Buffalo Gap
Growing up on his family farm, Blake has been involved in agriculture and has developed a passion for raising livestock. For his SAE he raises cattle and swine, as well as producing hay and corn for the family farm. He raises his cattle and swine for local youth to exhibit at their fairs and market animal shows. He also raises cattle for beef production. His daily duties include feeding, breeding, and maintaining herd health. He also raises hay, rye, and corn to feed his livestock, mixing custom feed mixes himself. He has developed knowledge of raising and marketing his livestock through local events and FFA opportunities. After high school Blake plans to attend the University of Tennessee Knoxville and pursue a degree in Agribusiness.
### 2023 HONORARY FFA STATE DEGREE Recipients

- Blakey Bates
- Sandi Bates
- Leann Batton
- Nathon Batton
- Raymond Bryant, Jr.
- John Carpenter
- Brody Crockett
- Mavis Farrar
- Christian Goodwin
- Elizabeth Goodwin
- Zach Jacobs
- Brian Jenkins
- Jeanette Jenkins
- Del. Barry Knight
- Secretary Matt Lohr
- Curtis Martin
- Karen Martin
- Eva Martin
- Kenneth Martin
- Edward McCann, Jr.
- Martha Moore
- Del. Will Morefield
- Whitney Perkins
- Carol Petrie
- John Petrie II
- Randy Powell
- Shannon Powell
- Joy Powers
- Naomi Reiter
- Scott Reiter
- Diane Richards
- Ruth Saunders
- Jeff Stout
- Kevin Thayer
- Jed Thomas
- Shelley Thomas
- The First Lady of Virginia, Suzanne S. Youngkin

### 2023 VIRGINIA FFA STATE Degree Recipients

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2023 State Proficiency Winners

Agricultural Communications
Ben Puckett - Abingdon

Agricultural Education
Kelli Garrett - Abingdon

Agriculture Mechanics Design/Fab
Cody Ridings - Sherando

Agricultural Processing
Matthew Hartley - Sherando

Agriculture Mech Repair/Main. - ENT
Adam Hawkins - Sherando

Agriculture Mech Repair/Main. - PL
Clay Lambert - Fort Defiance

Agriculture Research - Animal Systems
Lohr Thomas - Broadway

Agriculture Research - Integrated Systems
Katherine Powell - Nelson

Agricultural Sales - PL
Kerrigan Bauserman - Strasburg

Beef Production - ENT
Stephanie Schweigert - Broadway

Beef Production - PL
Kari Alderman - Carroll County Middle

Dairy Production - PL
Lucy Johnson - Spotswood

Diversified Agricultural Production
Corey Mann - Dinwiddie

Diversified Horticulture
December Ward - Puluaski

Diversified Livestock
Hayden Campbell - Nelson

Environmental Science and Natural Resources
Georges Saison - Rappahannock

Equine Science - ENT
Savannah Goodwin - Louisa

Equine Science - PL
Megan McClelland - Culpeper

Fiber and/or Oil Crop Production
Trenton Johnson - King William

Forage Production
Colton Reiter - Dinwiddie

Forest Management and Products
Courtney Begoan - Fort Defiance

Fruit Production
Houston Bryant - Nelson

Goat Production
Anna Grohs - Liberty-Bedford

Grain Production - PL
Wylie Johnson - King William

Landscape Management
Logan Bond - Carroll Middle

Poultry Production
Julia Haviland - Broadway

Service Learning
Emile Shell - James Wood

Sheep Production
Aiden Shiflet - Fort Defiance

Small Animal Production and Care
Mackenzie Hinshaw - James Wood

Specialty Animal Production
Grace Stowe - Chatham

Specialty Crop Production
Bruce Jones - Appomattox

Swine Production - ENT
Blake Caricofe - Buffalo Gap

Swine Production - PL
Ashlyn Almarode - Riverheads

Turf Grass Management
Katlyn Newman - Carroll County

Vegetable Production
Candace Fitzgerald - Nelson

Veterinary Science
Jadyn Smith - Carroll County

Wildlife Management
Jeremy Fisher - Rappahannock
On July 9-14 Virginia FFA held its annual FFA Leadership Camp at Graves Mountain Lodge. Chapters from across the state of Virginia had the opportunity to attend either one of the two days for day camp or spend the night at overnight camp where members attended workshops and completed service project through National FFA’s Living to Serve Grant Program where meals were packaged and donated to a local senior center.

Throughout the week, members had the opportunity to participate in various activities such as the swim Olympics, participate in a talent show and attend the Madison County Fair. Attending this camp allows members to further explore their leadership skills as well as socialize with members from other chapters within their groups. Members can also compete in contests such as Extemporaneous Public Speaking and Quiz Bowl to help strengthen their public speaking skills and their FFA knowledge.

Virginia FFA would like to thank Camp Directors Tess Seibel and Turner Trice for helping run camp this year and this year also marks the 58th year that Mr. Trice has helped with FFA Camp, and we are very grateful for his support over the years. We hope everyone had a great time at the Virginia FFA Leadership Camp this year and we can’t wait to see you next year.

As the week comes to an end members who attended the overnight camp posed for a picture before heading to a pavilion for the banquet.
Nerves and excitement run high as the 2023-2024 State Officers gather for the first time post-convention to begin training for the year that lies ahead of them. The week following State Convention, the State Officer team arrived back in Blacksburg for their first session of training. “Basecamp” is a training that all State Officers go through where they discover new things about themselves and their teammates, discuss influential leadership skills, and have the opportunity to bond as a team for the first time. The team had a blast throughout the entire week as they grew in their capacity for leadership, formed friendships, and shared plenty of laughs.

After a quick week-long turnaround, the new State Officers were back at it again at Checkpoint 1, this time with some familiar faces! Checkpoint 1 training took place July 10th-14th, at Graves Mountain Lodge alongside the Virginia FFA Leadership Camp. While the new State Officers were in training all week, the 2022-2023 State Officer Team was helping to lead camp. During Checkpoint 1, the team learned about good conversation skills and then enjoyed learning to write their own workshops. They were able to partner up and create four amazing workshops to use at COLTs and chapter visits throughout this year! So much fun was had in training and while hanging out with members during mealtimes and evening activities. The new State Officer Team also had the opportunity to participate in the camp service project alongside the FFA members and retired State Officers. The service project was packaging meals for community members in need. The team was then able to help deliver these meals locally. State Treasurer Jadyn Smith said the service project was her favorite experience at camp because “Sometimes we get so focused on what we want, we forget that some people don’t have the things that they need.”
Beating the Summer Heat
From July 17-21st, Virginia agriculture teachers gathered in Blacksburg, Virginia for the VAAE (Virginia Association of Agricultural Educators) Summer Conference. An annual event, this conference allows teachers time to collaborate with colleagues, learn from industry experts, and gain experience and certification to become better teachers for agriculture students. The conference was held at the Graduate Life Center at Donaldson-Brown, on Virginia Tech’s campus. Air-conditioning was abundant and was a welcome relief during the July heat. The week’s agenda included a short conference for early career educators (0-3 years), a mid-career short conference (7-15 years), a CDE/LDE fair, roundtable discussions, tours of local agriculture (specifically facilities at Virginia Tech), workshops, and hands-on sessions. Teachers also conducted area and state business to plan for upcoming events and activities and to elect new leaders for the coming year.
Evening Activities
The evenings were full of fellowship, recognition, and good food. On Tuesday, the Ag teachers took part in an agriculture trivia night, building camaraderie and having a little fun. On Wednesday evening, current and retired teachers gathered at the German Club Manor to recognize the contributions of people who have retired from the profession. At this event, old friends are reconnected, and younger teachers glean wisdom from their predecessors. The next evening, the teachers joined together for the annual VAAE Awards Banquet where teachers are recognized for their hard work and dedication to the profession. This year, we were honored to have Dr. Larry Case, former National FFA Advisor, delivered the keynote address. In his speech, he spoke to the good work that has been done and shared some ideas about the ways we will need to step up to the plate for agriculture students in the future. During the address, you could hear a pin drop! After dinner, awards were announced. A special presentation was made to honor the life and work of Mr. Dan Swafford. His wife, daughter, and son were on hand to share reflections and to receive the award.
After spending the week in DC, officers traveled to the beautiful town of Luray for the 2023 Farm Bureau Young Farmers Expo. The Virginia Farm Bureau Federation of Young Farmers is a leadership development and networking program for farmers and agriculture industry professionals between the ages of 18 to 35. The expo serves as a time where young farmers and others can network and gather to learn about key agricultural issues and explore agriculture in the area. During the state officer’s time at the expo, they traveled all over the Page County area, getting the opportunity to tour different farming operations, listen to amazing guest speakers, and get up to date on the latest agriculture news...

All in all, it was a blast!

On Friday night, the expo kicked off with guest speaker Alex White talking about the importance of planning for your retirement early. That may not sound like it was interesting, but Jadyn left with a full page of notes! After dinner, we were all experiencing a rollercoaster of emotions as Dr. Rousawn Dozier told us his story. By the time he was done, we were all left inspired.

On Saturday morning, several state officers competed in various competitions held during the expo. Nate, Adam, and Kirin all competed in the discussion meet. While they didn’t end up finishing in the top three, they all agreed that they had lots of fun! Earlier in the year, AK
had submitted an application and was selected as a finalist for the 2023 Outstanding Young Agriculturalist Award, so her “competition” was giving a speech about growing the future of agriculture. Out of the ten finalists selected, AK won! She will go on to give the same speech in November at the 2023 Virginia Farm Bureau Conference in front of six HUNDRED farmers and agriculturalists from all over the state!

After the competitions finished up, there was a panel discussion during lunch where young farmers and legislators discussed hot agriculture topics. After lunch, the farm tours got off to a great start. There were two separate groups who went to three different farms. Overall, the tours were very insightful and informative. The first stop was a small, but lively “you pick” operation, where we got closeups of different crops, mainly vegetables and LOTS of beautiful flowers! The second stop was at a local distillery/horse barn. After being able to tour the distillery, it was cool to be able to get up close and personal with all the horses at the barn! For the third and final stop on the tours, officers got the awesome opportunity to tour a massive dairy farm! The officers fell in LOVE with all the adorable calves around on the farm! After the tours wrapped up, everyone joined back up for dinner, where all the competition awards were announced.

On Sunday morning, the expo ended with an inspiring morning service and final discussion about last minute topics. The officers learned so much about the agricultural industry through many different aspects. The tours, panel discussions, and guest speakers provided everyone with lasting impressions and knowledge that they will use for many years to come!
The officer team was able to travel to Land of Promise farm in Virginia Beach to attend the Virginia Ag Expo. While they were at the expo, they helped set up and run the Virginia FFA Foundation booth, which promoted Virginia FFA and all it has to offer, and helped work in the welcome booth, where they greeted everyone who came to the expo. They were able to explore all of the different booths set up at the expo, and make connections with the company representatives, while also learning more about the company and what their focus is.

As the day went on it got more exciting. Governor Glen Younkin had come to give a speech and meet people who went to the expo. The state officers had the privilege to meet the Secretary of Agriculture in Virginia, Mr. Matt Lohr, as well as Governor Younkin. When talking to Governor Younkin, he expressed how much he loves the Virginia FFA, and Virginia agriculture industry.

The officer team pictured with Governor Glen Youngkin, Secretary Matt Lohr and Commissioner of VDACS Joe Guthrie.

In Governor Youngkin’s speech, he informed everyone that agriculture is the number one industry in Virginia and growing fast. He also mentioned that Goodyear is making all their tires from soybean oil instead of crude oil. The Virginia government is showing their support of that by using Goodyear’s tires on all their state vehicles.

The state officer team pictured with Governor Glen Youngkin, Secretary Matt Lohr and Commissioner of VDACS Joe Guthrie.

State Officers Kirin Miller, Jadyn Smith, Grace Walbroehl, and Anne Kathryn Martz pictured talking to candidates for the Virginia Congress.
Mr. O. Beverley Roller played an instrumental role in the promotion of the FFA in Virginia. He was a FFA member, agriculture teacher, state and national FFA officer, state FFA supervisor, agricultural industry professional, Virginia Delegate, and a church and civic club leader. Every individual that interacted with Mr. Roller believes that they are better for knowing him.

Mr. Roller was born and raised on a general livestock farm in Augusta County, which contributed to his affection for farming and later assisted him with his success in the FFA and as an agriculture teacher. Upon graduation from high school, Mr. Roller served as the State President from 1942-1943, and then was elected as the National FFA Vice President the following year. Following the end of his years of service, he attended Virginia Tech to continue his education. His education was interrupted with a one-year stint in the Merchant Marines during World War II. In 1948, Mr. Roller married his high school sweetheart, Dorothy Stroop, and graduated from Virginia Tech the following year.

Mr. Roller began his career as an agriculture educator in Augusta County where he served for 23 years in four local high schools. In 1972, he was appointed as an Area Supervisor of Agriculture Education in the Northern Area of Virginia. In addition to this role, Mr. Roller served as the State Advisor for the State FFA Officer team. Due to his various roles in serving agriculture students, teachers, and young farmers, Mr. Roller received numerous awards honoring him for his excellent service. Following 15 years of service as the Area Supervisor, Mr. Roller retired in 1987 and returned to his family farm. Mr. Roller died on March 30, 2016, leaving behind a legacy of three children, nine grandchildren, and the many student leaders that he interacted with throughout his career.

Virginia FFA and its members are all benefactors of his extensive knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm, which he focused on FFA, agriculture, community service, and young people. Mr. Roller at one time stated, “The FFA is just as great as you want to make it. It’ll do for you what you need in life, but it’s up to you. It’s not handed to you on a silver platter. It takes commitment, work, sacrifice, and a renewed emphasis on getting the most out of life that you can.” The O. Beverley Roller Legacy Endowment fund contributes to the Senior Prepared Speaking Career Development Event.

Virginia FFA Foundation
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vaffafoundation.org

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