



BLUE & GOLD NEWS

Pennsylvania FFA Happenings



OFFICER CORNER



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PRESIDENT

Growing up, many conversations around the dinner table revolved around corn yields, soybean prices and which piece of equipment needed to be repaired next.

Those conversations, along with my involvement in my local church in the small village of Malta, Pennsylvania, helped me understand what it means to live productively and efficiently.

But what does that really mean? Is productivity measured solely by the number of tasks we do in a day, or is there more to it?

I believe living productively is not about filling every minute of our schedules. Instead, it is about using our time, talents and opportunities we have been given to accomplish what truly matters. The more difficult question is determining what matters.

Although we cannot pursue everything on our to-do list at once, we can focus on our top priorities. Sometimes those priorities may include completing a specific job. Other times, they involve investing our time into creating lasting relationships.

In agriculture, efficiency is a requirement. As planting and harvesting windows tighten and input costs continue to rise, we need to make the most of every hour. It could mean the difference between a successful year and a disappointing one.

In an industry where efficiency is so crucial, it should not come at the

expense of forfeiting those relationships and moments that bring us joy off the farm.

Growing up, there were many evenings when I walked in the house, feeling dissatisfied about what little we accomplished that day. In my mind, there was always a more efficient way to use our time. It would never fail that my dad would respond, “There just aren’t enough hours in the day.”

I have realized this statement is more than just about running out of time. With our operation, there is always a piece of equipment that needs to be repaired or maintained. There is never a shortage of work to do. If we only judge our productivity by the number of tasks we get done, we will always feel behind.

Perhaps the feeling of productivity correlates with satisfaction. I realized this when I thought about how much I love to have a conversation.

Whenever I am working in the shop, my grandpa, Byron Martz, ensures he makes his rounds on the

farm. He might even stop to talk.

Typically, he reminisces about his time serving as the 1957-1958 Pennsylvania FFA State Reporter, specific highlights from last week’s Lancaster Farming or how we need to use his steel-wheeled New Idea rake/tedder on this cutting of hay because it is the superior rake.

I’d like to get back to work because I feel like I’m wasting time. After all, who would say sitting around having a conversation is productive when there are crops to plant?

But then I considered: what do I classify as productive? Even though I may not be completing tasks on the farm, I am learning about the history of the farm that has been in my family for generations.

Without these conversations, I would have never known that my grandpa started farming with no-till practices in the 1970s or that feed bags were hoisted to the top of the four-story chicken house addition to the barn utilizing only a pulley, rope,

a 1938 Oliver 70 and manpower.

I am fascinated by how the farm I live on was operated many years ago. I value the hard work and determination of those who farmed without the large, powerful equipment we consider essential today.

Our work in agriculture is crucial for feeding families, supporting communities and carrying on the tradition of the American farmer. Farming is a very rewarding career and lifestyle.

However, among the early mornings and late nights, we can overlook the opportunity cost of the moments that truly matter, moments that will never happen again.

So, the next time the tractor shuts off, take time to have a meaningful conversation with those who make that work worthwhile.

Those conversations may not have the highest return on investment by increasing yields, but they may produce something even more valuable: memories, wisdom and connections that last a lifetime.

Money in Milkshakes

In July, Tulpehocken High School hosted the Pennsylvania Association of Agricultural Educators Summer Conference.

During the conference, FFA members from the Tulpehocken FFA chapter had the opportunity to serve milkshakes to agricultural educators from across the state. These weren’t any ordinary milkshakes ... they were homemade, with a story behind them.

The Tulpehocken FFA chapter began the milkshake stand as a fundraiser in 2023 through a food science project. Students researched several different milkshake recipes, created the milkshakes, then conducted a study that evaluated flavor, texture, mouthfeel and appearance. They used their school administration as taste testers to help determine which recipe was the best.

In the end, they decided that the winning milkshake was made with Way-Har ice cream from a local Tulpehocken dairy and fresh whole milk. The milkshake is then topped with whipped cream.

Today, the chapter offers vanilla, chocolate and mixed milkshakes, along with root beer and orange floats.

They first began setting up their stand at homecoming and other sporting events.

As word spread, the community rallied behind the students and they began receiving requests to set up the stand at community events.

These have included customer appreciation days at Myerstown’s Twig and Twine Open House, My View Supply in Hamburg, Tractor Supply in Sinking Spring as well as Kauffman’s Annual Car Show in Bethel.

Setting up a milkshake stand has offered Tulpehocken students much more than just the opportunity to sell milkshakes. Students have learned valuable lessons about business organization and management.

Each year, they write a business plan for the stand and learn how to set and stick to a budget through the efforts of the officers and milkshake committee. They also receive ServSafe certification and conduct inspections to improve the safety and quality of their products.

Members have the opportunity to work at the stand as well. For younger members, this experience

teaches responsibility while helping them develop valuable food-service and customer-service skills.

The funds generated from the stand go directly into the Tulpehocken FFA account. In past years, these funds have helped offset the costs of ACES (Agricultural Cooperation Establishes Success), SLLC (State Legislative Leadership Conference) and the State FFA Conference.

Because of the success of the milkshake stand, the chapter has also been able to support other clubs within the school by sponsoring events.

Tulpehocken FFA members’ favorite memories include scooping ice cream and making milkshakes at the Tulpehocken homecoming game, working alongside their friends at the many events they attend, making money for their chapter and feeling accomplished by providing a great service to their community while helping lower costs for other students. Members also enjoy meeting different businesses and making new connections throughout their community.

What began as a food science



Tulpehocken FFA members ready to sell their milkshakes.

project has grown into a successful business that develops teamwork and real-world skills while strengthening connections throughout the community.

Tulpehocken FFA members continue to prove that when students are given the opportunity to turn their ideas into action, the possibilities are endless.

State Convention Winners

This June, approximately 2,300 members, advisers and guests from across the state attended the State Convention and Activities Week at Penn State. Over 1,900 students competed in career and leadership development events.

Teams and individuals who placed first in their events will represent Pennsylvania in events at the National Convention and Exposition in Indianapolis in October. Teams and individuals placing second will represent Pennsylvania at the Eastern States Exposition in Springfield, Massachusetts, in September.

First place:

Agricultural Communications: Pequea Valley FFA

Agriculture Education: Brooke Rubincam, Garden Spot FFA

Agricultural Issues: Pequea Valley FFA

Agricultural Sales: Manheim FFA

Ag Technology and Mechanical Systems: Midd-West FFA

Agronomy: Apple City FFA

Aquatic Resources: Kohana Yamashita, Sugar Valley Rural Charter School FFA

Conduct of Chapter Meetings: Northern Lebanon FFA

Creed Speaking: Brookelynn Parsons, Southern Huntingdon County FFA

Dairy Cattle Handlers: Elyse Mead, Apple City FFA

Dairy Cattle Management and Evaluation: Conococheague FFA

Employment Skills: Ella Fatkin, Oley Valley FFA

Environmental and Natural Resources: Sugar Valley Rural Charter School FFA

Extemporaneous Public Speaking: Nate Huber, Manheim FFA

Farm and Agribusiness Management: Conococheague FFA

FFA Knowledge: Headwaters FFA

Floriculture: Elizabethtown FFA

Food Science and Technology: Conrad Weiser FFA

Forestry: Athens FFA

Horse Evaluation: Oley Valley FFA

Junior Prepared Public Speaking: Bridget Dechow, Bald Eagle FFA

Land Use and Management: Cowanesque FFA

Livestock Evaluation: Midd-West FFA

Maple Syrup: Grand Canyon FFA

Marketing Plan: Gifford Pinchot FFA

Meats Evaluation & Technology: Tyrone Area FFA

Milk Quality and Products: Captain Jack FFA

Nursery/Landscape: White Rose FFA

Parliamentary Procedure: Northern Lebanon FFA

Poultry Evaluation: Grassland FFA

Safe Tractor and Equipment Driving: Nathan Criswell, Mifflinburg FFA

Scrapbook: Northern Lebanon FFA

Small Gas Engines: Midd-West FFA

Senior Prepared Public Speaking: Elizabeth Hoover, Newport FFA

Talent: Ainsley Eckroth, Millville FFA

Turfgrass Management: Southern Columbia FFA

Veterinary Science: Standing Stone FFA

Wildlife: Brandon Wenger, Manheim FFA

Second place:

Agricultural Communications: Eastern Lebanon County (ELCO) FFA

Agriculture Education: Maya Blair, Mason Dixon FFA

Agricultural Issues: Eagle View FFA

Agricultural Sales: Laurel FFA

Ag Technology and Mechanical Systems: Manor FFA

Agronomy: Garden Spot FFA

Aquatic Resources: Hailey Mosemann, Warfordsburg FFA

Conduct of Chapter Meetings: Headwaters FFA

Creed Speaking: Coriana Bomgardner, Northern Lebanon FFA

Dairy Cattle Handlers: Allison Younker, Tulpehocken FFA

Dairy Cattle Management and Evaluation: Tulpehocken FFA

Employment Skills: Alexis Leshner, Tri-Valley FFA

Environmental and Natural Resources: Warfordsburg FFA

Extemporaneous Public Speaking: Draven Stout, West Perry FFA

Farm and Agribusiness Management: Danville FFA

FFA Knowledge: Selinsgrove FFA

Floriculture: Manor FFA

Food Science and Technology: Pequea Valley FFA

Forestry: Central Mountain FFA

Horse Evaluation: Philadelphia FFA

Junior Prepared Public Speaking: Scarlet Neider, Conrad Weiser FFA

Land Use and Management: Oley Valley FFA

Livestock Evaluation: Manor FFA

Maple Syrup: Spud Growers FFA

Marketing Plan: Elizabethtown FFA

Meats Evaluation & Technology: Bedford County FFA

Milk Quality and Products: Big Spring Middle FFA

Nursery/Landscape: Franklin County FFA

Parliamentary Procedure: Eastern Lebanon County (ELCO) FFA

Poultry Evaluation: Manor FFA

Safe Tractor and Equipment Driving: Carson Martin, Grassland FFA

Scrapbook: Cumberland Valley FFA

Small Gas Engines: Selinsgrove FFA

Senior Prepared Public Speaking: Chelsie Bomgardner, Northern Lebanon FFA

Talent: Lillyana Torres, Danville FFA

Turfgrass Management: Cumberland Valley FFA

Veterinary Science: Manor FFA

Wildlife: Colby Strohecker, Upper Dauphin Area FFA