



# MISSOURI FFA TODAY

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## ON THE *calendar*

**APRIL 21-22** 94th Missouri FFA Convention, Columbia

**MAY 10** MU Invitational Agri-Science Fair, Columbia

**MAY 31-JUNE 3** LEAD Conference

**JUNE 6-JULY 15** Missouri FFA Camp, Camp Rising Sun, Kaiser

**JUNE 7-9** Public Speaking Academy, UCM, Warrensburg

**JUNE 13-15** Youth Pork Institute, University of Missouri, Columbia

**JUNE 10-11** Area Officer Institute, Camp Rising Sun, Kaiser

**JUNE 17-19** HYMAX Academy, Camp Rising Sun, Kaiser

**JUNE 28-30** HYPE Academy, Jefferson City

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# 94TH MISSOURI *FFA Convention*

## MEMBERS TO GATHER IN COLUMBIA FOR STATE COMPETITION, RECOGNITION

**T**he 94<sup>th</sup> Annual State FFA Convention is truly a special event this year. As we try to get back to “normal” after two years of making adjustments, we are excited to return to Columbia, April 21-22. The hard work and achievements of Missouri FFA members will be recognized and rewarded as members take part in career development events, award presentations, workshops and the ever-popular FFA Career Show.

The Convention theme this year is “NOW,” a reminder that we should celebrate in the here and now. For 94 years, our organization has given individuals an opportunity to develop

and expand their knowledge in the areas of applied science, technical and employability skills, while learning about our nation’s No. 1 industry: agriculture. Our organization provides members with the educational foundation to be leaders and innovators within our industry. Over the years, FFA has adjusted to reflect our ever-changing society. In an agriculture classroom today, students learn about many topics such as animal agriculture, crop production, mechanics, and agriscience.

Missouri welcomes National FFA Secretary Jackson Sylvester of Lake Forest FFA, Felton,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3**

**94TH STATE  CONVENTION**  
APRIL 21-22, 2022 • COLUMBIA, MO



## 2021-22 STATE FFA OFFICERS

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Vanessa Enslow • East Newton

Meagan Forck • Blair Oaks

Rachel Grimes • Archie

Seth Hansen • Chillicothe

Trenton Jones • Higginsville

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Caitlyn Kleffner • Rolla

Kraysen Leonard • El Dorado Springs

Grant Norfleet • Mexico

Hannah Shanks • Vienna

Riley Spurgeon • Cuba

Anna Triplett • Memphis

### State Officer Mentor

Dakota Pemberton

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# PRESIDENT'S *Perspective*

Spring is finally here! As I walk through my college campus, I feel so refreshed watching all of the trees and bushes blooming with beautiful, bright flowers. When I go home my heart is filled with joy as I watch all the new baby calves bouncing through the fields. I love seeing all the grass turn from brown to green again. The cool breeze of winter is fading and the fresh scent of spring fills the air. To me, spring is all about new beginnings and fresh starts. We have made it through the harsh winter months, and now temperatures are warming and the outlook is brighter.

However, my springtime in high school was a little different. In high school, I was always focused on FFA contest season. I did not allow myself the time to soak in the beauty that was surrounding me. It was always about studying for the next contest, fixing my mistakes and being the best. I would stress

myself out so much, often I forgot to truly enjoy all the other benefits contest season was providing me. These include the priceless communication skills, the lifelong friends and endless connections made at contests.

Over the past several weeks I have been blessed to visit FFA chapters across the state. I have thoroughly enjoyed seeing the excitement and energy that runs through our membership as each chapter gears up for contests. I match that energy as my excitement is buzzing for state convention where I get to help celebrate members for all of their outstanding accomplishments this year. As each one of you gets ready for this final burst through contest season, do not forget to relax and enjoy the beauty of it all. Enjoy the challenges. Enjoy the friends. Enjoy the memories that will be with you forever.

Good luck to you all, and I will see you soon!

Your friend,

*Kaitlin*

Windsor FFA members welcomed State FFA President Kaitlin Kleiboeker recently for a chapter visit.



Delaware. Sylvester will address attendees during the first and fifth general convention sessions on Thursday, April 21 and Friday, April 22.

In addition to the five general convention sessions, the 94<sup>th</sup> Annual Missouri FFA Convention will feature leadership workshops for members. The FFA Career Show also gives students and guests insight and the chance to learn about agricultural businesses, organizations, colleges and universities and more. Additionally, Missouri FFA will recognize the State Star Farmer, State Star in Agribusiness and State Star in Placement as well as present 893 State FFA Degrees to deserving members statewide. More than 8,000 people are expected to be in Columbia at the University of Missouri Hearnes Center for the state's largest FFA event.

—From Our Staff

(Right) National FFA Secretary Jackson Sylvester will speak to convention attendees during the first general session on Thursday, April 21 and the fifth general session on Friday, April 22. (Bottom left) Several leadership workshops will be featured throughout the convention. View the schedule online at [missouriffa.org/convention](http://missouriffa.org/convention). From proficiencies to career and leadership development events and state degrees, FFA members will be recognized for their achievements throughout the five sessions of this year's convention, which takes place at the Hearnes Center on the University of Missouri Campus in Columbia.



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# INSIDE ag issues

## EXPLORING THE INS AND OUTS OF THE AG ISSUES LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT EVENT

**P**roperty rights, broadband internet access, rural healthcare and wildlife pests – all issues facing the agricultural industry today and potential topics for teams competing in the Ag Issues Leadership Development Event (LDE). An opportunity for FFA members to explore challenges impacting agriculture in their community, state or country, Ag Issues is a collaborative effort that brings together research, facts and creativity.

“The Ag Issues Forum allows students to choose an agricultural issue related to their local community, evaluate both sides of the issue, and then develop a presentation highlighting both sides without drawing a conclusion,” said Deanna Thies, Boonville agricultural education teacher and

FFA advisor. “These presentations are then given throughout the community, prior to the contest, to spread the message about the issue.”

### MANY HOURS OF PREPARATION AND PRACTICE GO IN TO COMPETING IN THIS LDE.

“We have to practice writing, speaking and presenting,” said Scott Stone, Centralia agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor. “We also practice answering questions. The students must spend a lot of time reading everything they can find about their chosen topic.”

This unique take on challenges facing the

industry provides students with more than just public speaking skills.

“They have the opportunity to learn how to research and find credible websites,” Stone said. “They learn how to speak in public and build self-confidence. They also learn how to answer questions on the spot.”

“Students learn skills related to advocating, public speaking, presentation skills, the ability to form opinions and answer questions and so much more,” Thies added. “I have watched students gain confidence in themselves through this experience.”

### CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY IS A BONUS.

“I strongly believe Ag Issues has opened so many doors for my students at Paris,” said Josh Bondy, Paris agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor. “They have made connections with business and industry across the state. They have also gained a sense of pride in themselves after a season on the team. They are more confident, better able to see the big picture, can answer questions and feel comfortable talking to anyone.”

Bondy adds that the Paris chapter typically presents their skit to both local and statewide groups to help share their story.

### TEAMWORK IS A NECESSITY TO SUCCESS IN THIS EVENT.

“The best part of Ag Issues is the people,” Kendall Jones, Katelyn Smith and Josie



The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education State Board of Education hosted the 2021 Paris FFA Ag Issues team in Jefferson City, allowing them to present at the state board meeting. The Ag Issues Leadership Development Event requires participating students to present both sides of a controversy to the public to help raise awareness on the matter.

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Widel, members of the 2021 Boonville Ag Issues team, agreed. "With Ag Issues you are able to form a stronger connection with your team members."

This LDE pushes students, possibly changing the trajectory of their FFA career.

"Other students should participate in this contest because it is an opportunity to grow as an individual," said Annamarie Stone, Centralia FFA member. "This contest will push you out of your comfort zone and allow you to gain public speaking skills, writing skills, and help make you into a well-rounded individual. Although, I think most importantly students should join the Ag Issues team because it is an opportunity to push yourself as well as laugh with your team and share the story of agriculture."

According to Morghan Crain, Paris FFA member, "I think everyone should think about participating in the Ag Issues contest because, in my opinion, it is one of the most fun and exciting contests. When participating in Ag Issues, you learn many things about public speaking and working as a team, and many other skills that you will use throughout your life."

—By Brandelyn Twellman



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# BLOCKING *pressure*

**F**or hours, the cursor stayed frozen in place, while the time for submission crept closer and closer. Blankly, I stared at the screen knowing I needed to fill the page with meaningful words as soon as possible — words that were able to create laughs and motivation, but yet the page remained empty and the cursor remained in place.

Slowly, I lowered my head as a signal to the vacant page, I was admitting defeat. I needed an absolutely Earth shattering, mountain moving idea I could turn into a masterpiece. Yet, I had absolutely nothing. Eventually, I closed my computer and began to shift my focus somewhere else. Suddenly, I had it! The epiphany I was needing finally happened.

Quickly, I hopped back onto my vacant document, filling it with the words I had so

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***All of the pressure I put on myself to create an “Earth shattering masterpiece” had stopped me from creating anything at all. My own pressure had prevented my progress.***

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—Caitlyn Kleffner

—By  
Caitlyn  
Kleffner  
State Vice  
President



desperately needed.

Within no time, my blog was

completed, allowing me to realize something. All of the pressure I put on myself to create an “Earth shattering masterpiece” had stopped me from creating anything at all. My own pressure had prevented my progress.

Today, it is extremely difficult for all of us to not put pressure on ourselves. Whether it be to take a test, complete a writing assignment, compete in a sporting event, or perform in a competition, our own pressure can cause us to create obstacles. As we move forward, I encourage all of you to step back, take a break, take a breath, and let the ideas form their own.

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The **MFA Foundation** has awarded more than 14,000 scholarships to students from rural communities where MFA Incorporated and MFA Oil Company and their affiliates conduct business. The foundation also contributes to the Missouri 4-H Foundation, Missouri FFA Association, Missouri Young Farmers Association and other programs consistent with its mission to provide educational opportunity for youth.

Eligible high school seniors can apply for the scholarship online from December 1, 2021 through February 15, 2022.

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**ADAM BIRK**

**HOME FFA CHAPTER:**  
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**WHAT ADAM DOES:**

Adam is part owner of JB Bar Farms, a Sikeston, Missouri-based row crop operation.

**WHAT ADAM LEARNED IN FFA:** Adam credits FFA with helping boost his confidence and push him out of his comfort zone. The organization also taught him valuable public speaking and business skills he leans on today.



# CONFIDENCE *booster*

**G**rowing up, Adam Birk was comfortable on his family's beef cattle operation, Birk Genetics, where he worked alongside his dad raising Angus cattle.

Yet through his involvement in FFA, Birk says he was pushed very much out of his comfort zone through public speaking and leadership opportunities and career development events. Today, he says those experiences were beyond rewarding and helped prepare him for the future.

"Confidence would be the biggest thing I learned in FFA," Birk says. "It helped push me out of my comfort zone, and speaking skills for sure, FFA has been the primary source for my speaking skills."

As a member of the Jackson FFA Chapter, Birk grew a placement Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) by working on the family farm. He earned Star Greenhand and Chapter Awards, and served in leadership roles as chapter president and area treasurer. He also was on the 2011-12 state FFA officer team.

After high school, Birk earned his undergraduate degree in animal science from the University of Missouri-Columbia before completing a master's in poultry nutrition. At the time, Birk had part ownership in a pastured and cage-free poultry operation, selling eggs to grocery stores and restaurants in the southeast Missouri region.

While Birk really enjoyed the business aspect of the poultry operation, he and his partner closed the entity in the fall of 2019.

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***Find out how FFA helped push former member Adam Birk out of his comfort zone.***

***By Joann Pipkin***

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Following brief stints in the trucking and livestock marketing industries, Birk was offered an opportunity to become a partner in Jennings Brothers, a Sikeston-based farming operation.

Through a five-year transition plan, Birk and his partner, Jake Jones, will eventually take over the operation which is now called JB Bar Farms.

Birk says his involvement in FFA helped cultivate his interests in a variety of agricultural areas, helping to open doors of new opportunities in the industry.

"Opportunities came to me because I have proven myself to be a very hard worker that

is well versed in being able to take on and accomplish any task that's put in front of me," Birk explains. "FFA teaches a wide range of skills and offers a wide range of experiences. Soaking up those experiences is key."

He says he never expected the ag construction or farm management courses he took in high school to help him later in life, but he's leaned on knowledge from both to help him in his adult life.

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“One of the things that I’ve discovered is that to be a very good employee or business owner, the more you know, the more valuable you are,” Birk says. “Just because something seems like it’s not all that important to you whenever you’re in class in high school can come in extremely handy for some random thing later in life. Whenever you become the person to do that task, you become very vital to the business. That’s the position you want to be in.”

Time management and goal setting are other key skills that Birk says he learned through his involvement in FFA. He recommends members take a hard look at their

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***“FFA teaches a wide range of skills and offers a wide range of experiences. Soaking up those experiences is key.”***

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—Adam Birk, Former FFA Member

activities and employ those skills to capitalize on opportunities they’re presented.

According to Birk, if you can manage to do tasks daily, then you can have a much better idea of analyzing situations on a bigger scale as those relate to analyzing your life and career.

All in all, Birk encourages FFA members to embrace the experiences and opportunities that are presented through their involvement in the organization.

“Everyone’s regrets in life are from the things that they didn’t do,” Birk notes. “It’s never from the things that they did do. Whatever you’re scared to do, whatever it is, that’s the thing you need to do.”

# LEARN TO SPEAK OUT

**A**imed at better equipping Missouri FFA members with preparation and presentation skills, participants learn all the elements of speaking including preparation, writing and delivery. The program is open to FFA members 9-12 and provides a platform for students to ignite their public speaking careers. This learning experience has been possible due to the work of the University of Central Missouri staff from the Communications Department and will be held June 7-9, 2022 at UCM in Warrensburg. Registrations are needed by May 14 and can be found online at <https://dese.mo.gov/media/81236/download>

The Public Speaking Academy will offer three levels of speaking tracks for participants at Public Speaking Academy: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. Beginning students are those with little or no experience in public speaking. Intermediate students are those who have participated in a speaking event at the local, area, district, county or conference level and have not advanced to a higher level. If students have placed at any state-level competition, with the exception of the FFA Creed Speaking Contest, or have finished in the top three at a previous Academy, then they enroll in the advanced section. Students in all three sections will use communications technology while at the Academy, but in different ways.

For more information, contact Marie Davis at [marie.davis@dese.mo.gov](mailto:marie.davis@dese.mo.gov).

## Did you know?

**ADAM BIRK IS A FORMER STATE FFA OFFICER AND ONCE SOLD EGGS TO RESTAURANTS AND GROCERY STORES BEFORE BECOMING PART OWNER IN A SOUTHEAST MISSOURI FARMING OPERATION.**



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# BLOCKING *pressure*

**A**s we began preparing for the Missouri State FFA Convention, I found myself listening to old retiring addresses by state and national officers. As I sat on the couch in my dorm room, forcing my roommates to listen in on what a past national secretary had to say, these words resonated with me, “Whoever you are; be all you, all the time.”

The words were ironic in the moment. You see, I was trying to get a handle on what a state officer should say in a retiring address to the state association. I was trying to figure out how I should sound, how I should speak, and what message I needed to convey. I was not being all me; I was trying to be the idea I had for state officers, and I wanted to live up to the expectation.

Now, I will let you in on a little secret: I had been stressing over what my retiring address would be about, and if I could present it to the members of Missouri FFA. What I did not realize is that once you let



**You are the way  
you are for a  
specific reason.  
Never let a  
shortcoming  
dictate your  
future.**

—Rachel Grimes

Whether you win your first speech contest or come up short in your last, the experience —the learning, the skill, the GROWTH— is what will matter later in life. More times than not, I came up short while competing in the FFA. Each time, I tried to understand why I was not good enough to stand on the stage at state convention and receive a plaque, or why I could not grasp certain concepts in a career development event. It would have been so easy to throw in the towel and focus on the negative, but with each failure, I became more hungry for growth. Without the failure, I would not have gotten better.

If you take one thing from this message, let it be this: you are the way that you are for a specific reason. Never let a shortcoming dictate your future.. Never be afraid to simply be yourself because that is when true growth and success occur.

—By Rachel Grimes  
State Vice President

go of certain expectations, you become free of the pressure that comes with them. As you embark on the many adventures that the FFA offers you, let go of the expectations, let things just be.

While it's often easy to focus on the failure or the shortcomings, I promise that you won't be successful if you never get over the negative. I challenge each of you to learn from the mistake, adjust from the failure and focus on the real win — growth.

Whether you win your

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# CONVERSATIONS

## Charting THE Course

If you were to say, “tell me in one sentence what your role is with the Missouri FFA Foundation,” my response would be, “to secure the resources the ag education system throughout Missouri needs to continue our role as one of the best in the country.” However, that response doesn’t tell you what is one of my favorite aspects of my job. Truly, one of my favorite aspects of this job are all the conversations I get to have with employers, teachers, students and alumni.

When I first talk with companies about supporting the Missouri FFA Foundation, I try to ask two questions: One, “What does FFA and ag education mean to you; and two, why do you want to support FFA and ag education?” Without fail, the initial answer is almost always related to work force development and building a talent pipeline. However, it’s quickly followed by comments about employees who were involved in ag education classes and FFA during high school never fail to exhibit “soft-skills” such as showing perseverance in overcoming challenges, having the determination to find solutions to problems, focusing on producing a quality product, demonstrating adaptability to changes, emulating positive communication, and demonstrating trustworthiness. It’s the hands-on nature of ag

education and the career and leadership development events that make up FFA that offer opportunities for employees to develop those skills.

If I ask those same questions of FFA alumni, they often share stories of the content knowledge they built and how they discovered new career paths within agriculture beyond those they saw within their home



communities. Most will tell me about their ag education teachers. They share that their teachers helped them build confidence, encouraged them to show persistence, and always advocated for their best interests and their future. Without fail, every alum tells me about the friendships they made and the professional network they built (even for industries outside of agriculture) by participating in the area, district, state and national events available through FFA.

Without fail, my conversations with ag teachers almost always entail stories of new or expanded subjects or projects they want to offer students. Our Missouri teachers recognize that the ag industry is evolving and growing. They work hard to build their

own knowledge or bring in experts in those areas. Often, they share with me the only limiting factors are their own time and their district’s financial resources to buy the necessary equipment and supplies to expand their curriculum.

In December, when I notified a student that she had received one of the Missouri FFA Foundation’s SAE grants, she



asked me which SAE project had been funded because she had submitted multiple grants. I could have simply answered based on the proposal that received the most points. However, both project proposals were high quality. One of the projects was an expansion of a previous SAE but it was the more costly of the two. The second project was for a new SAE, but it was one she could continue after graduating high school to help pay for her post-secondary education. As we talked through her options, she explained that the expansion project while more expensive and not something she could continue long term would have a quicker return on investment. Through our conversation, she realized that if she focused

on that project first, it would supplement her funds to launch the second project which was the one that had long-term potential. As a 15-year-old, this student was making financial decisions to provide income for at least the next six to seven years and was engaging in the type of reasoning all successful business owners need to employ. Without receiving an SAE grant she most likely wouldn’t have engaged in this strategic visioning process because her family didn’t have the financial resources for her to even consider expanding the existing or starting the new project.

My take-away from all these conversations is that the Missouri FFA Foundation’s role isn’t to secure resources solely to allow Missouri youth to have great, fun experiences. Rather, the Missouri FFA Foundation’s role is to help ensure state-wide opportunities

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# NOMINATE YOUR SENIOR



## Honor the hard work of FFA members graduating high school with a nomination to the 1928 Senior Society.

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*\*Only nominations made by April 13 are guaranteed recognition at state convention.*

**Visit [donorbox.org/mo1928](http://donorbox.org/mo1928) to make a nomination.**



### FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

exist for career exploration and skill development; thoughtful decision making; building emotional intelligence, communication and other interpersonal skills; and nurturing entrepreneurial spirit, all with the ultimate goal of helping students take charge of their present and determine the direction of their own future.

Recently, Grant Norfleet, Missouri FFA Association State Vice-President told me that donating to support the Missouri FFA Foundation is an investment. He continued, "It helps provide students with the skills they need to become successful leaders in

the workforce and community throughout the state. The students you invest in today will make an impact that lasts a lifetime. Your donation is not only an investment in the lives of young agriculturalists but the lives of all who are touched by agriculture."

As the foundation's director, it's my distinct pleasure to ensure the financial gifts from our sponsors and donors are used to provide those lifetime impactful opportunities and that's the course you will continue seeing the Missouri FFA Foundation take.

—Heather Dimitt-Fletcher

*Heather Dimitt-Fletcher is executive director of the Missouri FFA Foundation.*

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\*Scholarship applicants must meet all qualifications in application to be eligible \*\*Grant and Ag Youth Funding applicants must be a member of a 4-H club or FFA chapter located in one of the 102 Missouri counties served by FCS Financial. Growing Relationships. Creating Opportunities. is a trademark of FCS Financial, ACA.

