Missouri FFA will honor members April 20–24 using video releases

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo., April 10, 2020 – The Missouri FFA Association will honor fellow members for outstanding achievements April 20–24 utilizing video releases accessible through social media and association websites. The 92nd Missouri FFA Convention was postponed due to the pandemic, but video releases and a summer event will replace many activities normally held during the annual April convention.

Missouri FFA Executive Secretary Keith Dietzschold detailed this year’s plans.

“Due to the pandemic facing our state, nation and world, the tough decision was made to postpone our convention,” Dietzschold said. “As of press time, we are weighing all options, and are hopeful we can have a one-day summer convention held face-to-face or virtually. In the meantime, we are moving ahead to recognize many of our outstanding members. April 20-24 we will be releasing the names of award recipients in the following categories - proficiency awards, chapter awards and the top-four star candidates, along with a list of state degree winners. To share this information, we will use Missouri FFA Facebook and Instagram pages, as well as missouriffa.org and the convention media website. We are exploring when and how to hold Career and Leadership Development Events. Hopefully, later this spring we can shed light on when these can be held and in what fashion – face-to-face or virtual. Our number-one concern is your safety, and we are asking you to continue following guidelines set in place by our leaders.”

State Star Farmer, State Star in Agribusiness, State Star in Placement and State Star in Agriscience will be named during a summer event, with area stars and the top four in each category to be recognized through the April video releases. During the video releases, 578 FFA members will be recognized with awards in 46 agricultural proficiency areas for development of their supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program. The proficiency areas are varied and include production, management and communications disciplines. In Missouri, SAE programs during the 2018-19 school year generated more than $50 million in student income.

Missouri FFA Association Advisor Leon Busdieker said the state association will present the State FFA Degree to a record 988 members who, as a result of their agricultural and leadership achievements, have qualified for the state's highest FFA degree.

"Missouri FFA members have always considered earning the State FFA Degree an honor,” said Busdieker. “Instead of limiting the number of individuals eligible to earn the degree, the Missouri FFA Association has established a minimum set of qualifications, increasing the number of recipients. This gives students a more defined path to the recognition."

Missouri has the largest number of American FFA Degree recipients of any state. In October 2019, 520 Missouri FFA members received the American FFA Degree during the National FFA Convention held in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Two Missouri FFA chapters will be chartered during the summer session. The new chapters are Climax Springs FFA Chapter, Climax Springs, and Hillcrest FFA Chapter, Springfield.
Missouri FFA President Brenden Kleiboeker, Pierce City FFA Chapter member, said this year’s theme HOME has taken on a whole new meaning.

"Nearly a year ago, the 2019-2020 state FFA officers chose the theme HOME for our year, Kleiboeker said. “Though we all came from different corners of the state, we all found our home in the Missouri FFA Association. We all had different life experiences, different joys and different trials. However, each and every one of us found our home in Missouri FFA. Little did we know that in the spring of 2020 HOME would have a much different meaning. This spring, nearly every one of nearly 26,000 Missouri FFA members is confined to their home. FFA members have never been ones to back down from a challenge. This is a great time for FFA members to put extra time into their Supervised Agricultural Experience, or perhaps extra time into studying for a Career Development Event or Leadership Development Event. Though times are uncertain, I am confident Missouri FFA members are equipped with the leadership skills necessary to persevere. Even with nothing set in stone, after the battle has been won against this invisible enemy, I truly look forward to later this year when members will come HOME to Columbia for the 2020 Missouri FFA Convention.”

The Missouri FFA will present awards this summer to several adults and groups for their support of agricultural education and FFA. This year, 26 Honorary State FFA Degrees will be presented. An additional 16 honorary degrees will be presented to parents of retiring state officers.

The Missouri FFA Association is recognizing Diane Olson, Jefferson City, Missouri, with the Distinguished Service Citation. Olson from 1985 to 2019 worked with promotion and education programming for Missouri Farm Bureau, Jefferson City, Missouri. She worked with Agriculture in the Classroom and Agricultural WebQUEST, started with a federal grant secured by Olson. Olson was the force behind the annual Health and Safety Roundup at the Western Farm Show, Kansas City, Missouri, and was instrumental in developing the GROW EXHIBIT at the St. Louis Science Center, St. Louis, Missouri. Olson retired from Farm Bureau in 2019 and is currently working with the University of Missouri to develop a demonstration farm for hands-on experiences. Presentation of the Distinguished Service Citation will take place this summer.

The Missouri FFA Association has 348 chapters and 25,945 members, ranking sixth as a state in membership. FFA strives to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.