



Missouri FFA TODAY

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ISSUE 5

2025

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Silex FFA member McKenna Claborn was named State Star in Placement earlier this year. She hopes to pursue a career in agronomy after completing college at Texas Tech University.





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TO:
Cindi Noblitt

FROM:
Carthage
FFA Member

Reichel Awarded Harbor Freight Grant

Dean Reichel, agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor at New Bloomfield, was recently one of 25 teachers nationwide to be selected as the winner of Harbor Freight's national teaching prize, the 'Tools for Schools Award'.

The prize grants \$15,000 to Reichel and \$35,000 to New Bloomfield High School's ag department. Harbor Freight administers the award to recognize teaching excellence. Congratulations, Mr. Reichel!

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MISSOURI FFA IN ACTION




State Officer Visits in Full Swing This Fall

Missouri FFA State President Ivy Elwell met recently with members from Marshall. This year's state officer team travels across the state during their year of service meeting with members to encourage goal setting and member growth. Follow their travels on Facebook and Instagram @MissouriFFA.



ARE YOU HEADED TO CONVENTION?

Click at right and listen up to be sure your official dress is in order for National FFA Convention. 

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Ivy Elwell | State President



We only get four years in our blue corduroy jackets. As we move into the fall season, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. With all of the activities and opportunities FFA has to offer, it becomes hard to find time to do it all, and we begin to forget about our plans for those blue jackets.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit the Marshall FFA Chapter and speak with their freshman and sophomore students about the many pathways in FFA. The students were awesome to work with and each of them walked away with an FFA goal they would like to achieve. From wanting to run for a chapter office to aspirations of receiving the state degree, it was clear that each of them had a strong purpose in mind.

Writing down our goals and putting them in a place where we see them daily keeps us motivated and moving forward. As our lives get busy, it is easy to lose sight of our priorities. We slowly stop showing up to chapter meetings and events, and our FFA goals begin to slip to the back-burner. A calendar is a great tool for keeping track of all of the activities and charting your course for the year. Set goals for yourself, track your progress and use them to help you grow. It is important to prioritize showing up and being present while also taking the time to dream forward. We only have so much time in our blue jackets. Take advantage of every FFA opportunity possible; you never know which one will be the missing piece that makes all your goals fall into place!



UPCOMING events

OCT 29-NOV 1 National FFA Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana

NOV 1 National FFA Scholarship Available Online

NOV 6 Southeast District Fall Speaking Contest, Bloomfield

NOV 8 Celebrate Agriculture, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville

NOV 10 Southwest District Fall Speaking Contest, Marshfield

NOV 11 Northwest Missouri State University School of Agricultural Sciences Visit Day, Maryville

NOV 12 Central District Fall Speaking Contest, UCM, Warrensburg

NOV 12-13 Governor's Conference on Agriculture, Columbia

NOV 13 South Central District Fall Speaking Contest, Rolla

NOV 14 UCM Discover Ag Day, Warrensburg

NOV 14 2026 FFA Swine Facility Management Contest Applications Due

NOV 15 SAE Grant Online Applications Close

NOV 18 Northeast District Fall Speaking Contest, Monroe City

NOV 19 Northwest District Fall Speaking Contest, Cameron

NOV 21 Soy Innovation Challenge Submissions Due

DEC 1 BOAC Grant Applications Due

DEC 7-9 Missouri Farm Bureau Annual Meeting, Margaritaville, Lake Resort, Osage Beach

DEC 7 Missouri Farm Bureau FFA Speaking Finals, Margaritaville, Lake Resort, Osage Beach

DEC 11-12 Missouri Livestock Symposium, Truman State University, Kirksville

DEC 15 2026 Youth Pork Ambassador Program Scholarship Applications Due



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CHAPTER SPOTLIGHTS

Fright Night in the Ag Shop

Learn how Oak Ridge FFA members transform their shop each fall, creating fun for everyone.

When the lights go out at Oak Ridge High School's agriculture building each October, something spooky takes over. The Oak Ridge FFA Chapter transforms their ag shop into the "Haunted Ag Shop," a thrilling community event that blends teamwork, creativity and fright.

For the past three years, the Haunted Ag Shop has been a highlight of fall in Oak Ridge. Before moving indoors, FFA members hosted a Haunted Hayride and a Haunted Corn Maze, but unpredictable weather and safety concerns inspired a new idea—one that could be held rain or shine. The result was a hauntingly fun tradition that continues to grow each year.

Turning a working ag shop into a haunted house takes weeks of planning and a lot of imagination. The process begins with a floor plan, mapping out six or seven themed

hallway scenes and two larger classroom scenes that create the full haunted house experience. Every year, the students try to add something new so returning visitors get a fresh experience.

Safety and creativity go hand in hand in the Haunted Ag Shop. Props and decorations must look realistic, but also hold up to an evening full of shrieks and startled guests.

"Sometimes something looks great, but if it isn't safe, it doesn't make the cut," one member explains. About 25 students serve as costumed actors while another 10 handle lighting, sound effects, ticket sales, safety checks and more. Each FFA member involved plays to their strengths and gives up their own night of thrills to host the event for others.

From the beginning, students take ownership of their rooms, designing, decorating and rehearsing their scares in preparation for the event. The

planning of this event is filled with leadership, time management skills and teamwork, with a lot of laughter mixed in.

For many members, the Haunted Ag Shop is the most anticipated event of the year.

"I love dressing up and trying to make people scream—it is so much fun to see their reactions," says Oak Ridge FFA member Lexie Seiler.

Others appreciate the sense of community it builds.

"It takes all of us working together to make it happen, and by the end of the night we feel like we've built something special," adds Oak Ridge FFA member Emma Boyd.

From eerie soundtracks to the final screams, the Haunted Ag Shop is more than a haunted house. It is an unforgettable learning experience and a beloved community tradition hard work makes possible year after year.



Vetting Vet Science

East Prairie students are reaping the benefits of hands-on lessons in veterinary medicine thanks to the ag ed program's vet science lab.

At East Prairie High School, students are not just reading about veterinary science — they are experiencing it firsthand. The agricultural education program's Veterinary Science Lab gives students hands-on experience in everything from small animal care to livestock management, preparing them for real-world success in veterinary and animal science careers.

The program, taught by ag ed teacher and FFA advisor Rilyn Small, allows students to earn their Certified Veterinary Assistant credential and take dual-enrollment Animal Science courses through the University of Missouri. It is a blend of classroom instruction, laboratory work and Supervised Agricultural Experience projects that provide a real look at veterinary medicine. Students practice animal restraint, sanitation, vaccinations and clinical procedures while also learning professionalism and communication,

key skills for anyone entering the veterinary field.

Getting the program started took dedication. The school first had to zone the Ag Center as an "Ag Zone" to house animals like cattle, horses, sheep, goats and poultry on campus. After securing support from administration and local veterinary clinics, the program expanded its facilities to include a small animal lab and clinical workspace. Multiple grants through the Missouri FFA Foundation, USDA Rural Development and community partners helped fund the purchase of veterinary tools, handling chutes and instructional materials. Partnerships with local clinics now give students internship and shadowing opportunities.

"Veterinary work cannot be mastered from textbooks alone," Small says. "Students need real procedures and real animals to build confidence and responsibility."

That is exactly what they get in the

vet science lab, caring for cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, rabbits, dogs, cats and horses. Students appreciate the opportunity to learn hands on.

"Our Vet Science program is the starting point for many future veterinarians," says Ella Dunn, an agricultural education student at East Prairie. "Mr. Small goes above and beyond to prepare students for their futures."

"Through this program, I have learned how to take care of animals the correct way and how to treat different things they may experience," adds Karsyn Graham, another agricultural education student at East Prairie.

The program equips students with veterinary science technical skills and helps inspire lifelong careers in the field, Small concludes.

"For a rural, low-income district like ours, this pathway opens doors for students who might not otherwise have access to such opportunities," he says.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



NAME: Colton Spencer

HOMETOWN: Aurora, Missouri

FFA CHAPTER: Aurora

COLLEGE: University of Missouri,
Agricultural Education

OCCUPATION:

Range and Pasture Specialist,
Corteva Agriscience

FFA TODAY: Tell us a little about yourself.

SPENCER: I currently reside in Sherman, Texas. When I am not working, I enjoy hanging out with friends, playing golf, going to the lake, hunting and fishing or watching sports.

FFA TODAY: Tell us about your involvement in agriculture.

SPENCER: Outside of work, I am actively involved in agriculture through organizations such as Texas Farm Bureau and Texas A&M University Extension. I also volunteer to help judge Leadership Development Events with Texas FFA.

FFA TODAY: Can you share about your current occupation?

SPENCER: I currently serve as a range and pasture specialist for Corteva in North Texas and Southern Arkansas. I operate a large sales territory where I sell pasture herbicides to distributor partners, retail farm and feed stores and ranchers.

FFA TODAY: What was your favorite part of FFA?

SPENCER: My favorite part of FFA was all the connections and friendships I was able to form. Many of the friends and professional connections I have today are because of my time in the National FFA Organization.

FFA TODAY: What activities were you involved in while in FFA?

SPENCER: I was actively involved in many activities through FFA, including local and national conferences, career development events, leadership development events, as well as serving as Missouri FFA State President in 2016.

FFA TODAY: What was the greatest lesson you learned in FFA?

SPENCER: The greatest lesson I learned is "You get out of it what you put into it." This can be applied to anything we are involved in throughout life. We can choose to wake up every day and put forth the effort to

maximize our results or we can sit back and watch someone else do it.

FFA TODAY: What was your favorite memory from your time in FFA?

SPENCER: My favorite memory is serving as State FFA President in 2016 and State FFA Mentor in 2017. It was a tremendous experience that allowed me to serve the membership of the Missouri FFA Association. It allowed me to meet so many quality people and build lifelong friendships and connections with them. I enjoyed being able to give back to the Association and help motivate younger members so they could have the same life-changing experiences that I was blessed to have.

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FFA TODAY: How did FFA impact where you are today?

SPENCER: Being involved in FFA took me from a shy freshman to a confident senior. It gave me the life experiences and skills to be successful in college and the “real world.” The people I built connections with and skills I gained have had a direct impact on my career with Corteva.

FFA TODAY: Who is your biggest influence?

SPENCER: My parents have always had the biggest influence on my life. They are extremely supportive and have always pushed me to become a better version of myself.

FFA TODAY: What advice do you have for current FFA members?

SPENCER: My advice is to get involved in every event possible and really push yourself to get outside of your comfort zone. Make the choice to participate in public speaking and other LDEs and CDEs, as they will help you gain skills that directly translate to your future career regardless of whether it involves agriculture or not.



Former FFA member Colton Spencer (above right) educates farmers as part of his job as a range and pasture specialist with Corteva.

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Cultivating Success

Learn how Silex FFA member McKenna Claborn grew her placement SAE into successful involvement in the agricultural industry.



From the seed shed to the bank teller window, McKenna Claborn has built a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) that reflects both her work ethic and her deep roots in agriculture. The Silex FFA member was named the Missouri FFA State Star in Agricultural Placement at the 2025 State Convention for her dedication across three unique career pathways — agribusiness systems, environmental service systems and plant systems.

Claborn's primary placement is with her family's business, Prairie View Seed, located in Hawk Point and Elsberry. There, she helps farmers select high-yielding hybrids, treats soybeans, operates a forklift and delivers seed to customers.

"Working for Prairie View Seed has taught me the importance of customer service and prepared me for my future career as an agronomist," Claborn says.

Claborn's second placement takes her behind the counter at Silex Banking Company, where she assists

customers with deposits, agricultural loan payments and financial inquiries — gaining valuable insight into the business side of farming.

"The bank has expanded my understanding of agricultural financing and given me practical finance skills," Claborn says. "I have also acquired problem-solving and critical thinking skills that I would not have gained if it wasn't for this work experience."

In her third SAE, Claborn operates a lawn care service, managing over 20 acres through mowing, landscaping and fertilizer application. She has grown in this role from strictly a lawn mower to an all-encompassing lawn care provider.

Beyond her work experiences, Claborn has served as Silex FFA President and Area V FFA First Vice President, earning numerous honors in contests such as the Ag Issues Forum, Creed Speaking and Meats Evaluation.

She currently attends Texas Tech University studying plant and soil science, continuing her journey toward a career as an agronomist.



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Rooted in the Future

Learn how farming, flexibility and family fuel Brett Fenner's SAE success.

For Brett Fenner of the Sweet Springs FFA Chapter, farming is more than just soil and seed — it is a symbol of family legacy, personal drive and the future he is working hard to build. His Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) began with a 13-acre corn field he cash rented from his grandfather with three main goals.

"I wanted to start farming on my own," Fenner says. "My first goal was to secure a rental agreement by January 1, 2025."

His second goal was to raise a 200-bushel per acre corn crop for the 2025 growing season.

"I planted 13050 Pioneer, 113-day corn in this field," he says. "The variety tends to do well in a corn-on-corn rotation. It also does well on bottom ground, handling wet and drier conditions."

Fenner's third goal is to market his 2025 crop to not only cover his costs, but also to cover the expenses of a soybean crop next spring. Dealing with the unpredictable weather conditions of the Midwest, Fenner has already learned the virtue of patience while waiting on fields to dry out.

While he waited for the field to dry, Fenner focused his energy on working for his family's farm, Marshall & Fenner Farms. There, he assists with general labor and plays an important role in soil

fertility planning. Using a soil sampling probe mounted on a four-wheeler he purchased himself, Fenner collects samples that are sent to Midwest Labs for analysis. These results help guide fertilizer prescriptions for hundreds of acres. Fenner has been able to gain experience in soil evaluation and record keeping through FFA contests.

"This year, I participated in soil evaluation at the district level and the Beginning Placement Record Book at the area and state levels, winning the area and receiving a Gold Rating at the state level," he says. "I used to sample fields by hand, which took a long time

in drought-ridden ground. Now I can do an entire field in one day. I am sampling around 500 acres per year and hope to expand to other farms in our area."

Thanks to his Missouri FFA SAE Grant, Fenner was able to cover the cost of fertilizer and seed, which were essential expenses for expanding his SAE. His family is supporting him with equipment use in exchange for labor.

"SAE grants help students turn an idea into a reality," Fenner says. "This is my first crop to plant, raise and harvest. I am learning a lot, especially about soil fertility and how I can help make our farm more sustainable."

SAE Grant applications are now open to expand your own project! To apply, students must submit their applications through the National FFA application system by November 15. Learn more at <https://www.ffa.org/.../grants-and-scholarships/sae-grants/>.

Sweet Springs FFA member Brett Fenner purchased a four-wheeler and mounted a soil probe on it, which improves efficiency on his family's farm.



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WHAT KIND OF PIE ARE YOU?

1. How would you describe your feelings toward fall?

- a. Fall is fine
- b. I live for fall
- c. Fall is fun
- d. Can't it stay summer?

2. Pick a fall activity:

- a. Bonfire
- b. Hayride
- c. Pumpkin Patch
- d. Concert

3. Pick an FFA activity:

- a. National Convention
- b. Fall Speech
- c. Corn Maze
- d. Haunted House

4. What is your favorite fall drink?

- a. Latte
- b. Apple Cider
- c. Chai Tea
- d. Sweet Tea



5. What is your favorite subject in ag class?

- a. Animal Science
- b. Plant Science
- c. Leadership
- d. Communications

6. Pick your favorite Thanksgiving protein:

- a. Turkey
- b. Ham
- c. Chicken
- d. Beef

7. Pick your favorite Thanksgiving side:

- a. Stuffing
- b. Sweet Potatoes
- c. Cranberries
- d. Green Bean Casserole

8. Pick a fall color:

- a. Red
- b. Orange
- c. Yellow
- d. Brown

9. Pick an FFA office:

- a. President
- b. Vice President
- c. Secretary
- d. Treasurer

10. Pick your favorite way to eat an apple:

- a. Apple Crisp
- b. Apple Pie
- c. Caramel Apples
- d. Apple Cider

RESULTS:

If you picked mostly A's: You're apple pie! You like a classic fall. Don't be afraid to go back to the basics and celebrate a traditional fall this year.

If you picked mostly B's: You're pumpkin pie! You love all things fall - you go crazy for it. Don't be afraid to add something new to your fall traditions this year.

If you picked mostly C's: You're chocolate pie! You like to have fun this time of year. Bring a friend along for the fun this fall season.

If you picked mostly D's: You're pecan pie! You like to be unique, even in the way you celebrate the changing of the seasons. Add your own twist to a fall favorite tradition this year.

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