



# Missouri FFA TODAY

FEBRUARY

ISSUE 1

2026

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**Higginsville FFA member Lynn Dyer shares her love of the industry with others through her award-winning agricultural education SAE.**





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**TO:**  
Matt McCrory

**FROM:**  
Troy FFA Member

“What makes teaching ag great is being able to see the hard work of your teaching pay off in your students’ successes.”

—Hannah Fritsche-Donze  
Agriculture Instructor, Ste. Genevieve

## My Ag Teacher is Great Because ...

“ He showed me how to be confident with myself with the meats team and outside of it, too. He showed me how to be a leader and know that it’s not all about myself, but it’s a team. He always puts a smile on my face when I’m down. Thank you, Mr. McCrory!”



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# MISSOURI FFA IN ACTION




## Members Find Their Voice at Public Speaking Institute

This year's Public Speaking Institute (PSI) was all about helping FFA members find and believe in their voice. Through intentional practice, peer support and meaningful instruction, FFA members strengthened their communication skills and grew more confident stepping in front of an audience. The PSI sessions were held Jan. 3 in Springfield and Jan. 17 in Columbia.



## Ag Facts That Feed Missouri

In honor of National Ag Day in March, Missouri FFA State Officers highlight fun and important facts that show how agriculture fuels our state every day. Click at right to listen! 



## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Ivy Elwell | State President



It has been an extremely busy start to the new year—not just for us, but for FFA members as well. To kick off the year, our officer team had the opportunity to meet with more than 4,800 freshmen from all over the state at Greenhand Motivational Conferences. I could not have asked for a better way to start my year! During these conferences, freshman FFA members learned all about the incredible opportunities FFA has to offer.

At the end of our time together each day, the freshmen wrote down goals they had for their time in FFA. For some, this included attending events like HYMAX or being on a CDE team this spring. Once they had some ideas in mind, each student made a list of their favorites and explored ways to reach these goals. For some, that meant

filling out an application; for others, it meant signing up with their advisor.

It's not just Greenhands who should be thinking about what they want to do in FFA. Maybe you joined FFA later, or recently realized a passion for leadership or becoming more active in your chapter. There is still time to learn and be a part of everything FFA has to offer. This could mean trying public speaking for the first time, signing up to attend camp, or even just showing up to one of your chapter's meetings. Just like for Greenhands, FFA's opportunities are endless. Take the time to step outside your comfort zone and try something new. You never know what opportunity might be waiting for you.



# UPCOMING events

**FEB 21-28** National FFA Week

**MAR 1** FCS Financial Scholarship Applications Due

**MAR 9-12** National PAS Conference, Chateau on the Lake Resort, Branson

**MAR 18** Northwest District LDEs, Cameron

**MAR 20** Southeast District Ag CDEs, Cape CTC, Cape Girardeau

**MAR 23** Northeast District FFA LDEs & Ag Sales CDE, Monroe City

**MAR 24** Southeast District Ag CDEs, SEMO Rec Center, Cape Girardeau

**MAR 27** Southeast District Horse CDE, Perryville Hope Center, Perryville

**MAR 28** Southwest District Ag LDEs, MSU, Springfield

**MAR 30** Northeast District CDEs (Indoor Day), Macon

**MAR 30** Southeast District Ag CDEs, Three Rivers CC, Poplar Bluff

**MAR 30-31** Southwest District Ag CDEs, MSU, Springfield

**MAR 31** Central District CDEs, UCM, Warrensburg

**MAR 31** South Central District CDEs & FFA LDEs, Rolla

**MAR 31 – APR 1** Northwest District CDEs, NWMSU, Maryville

**APR 1** Northeast District Ag CDEs Outdoor Day, Boone County Fairgrounds, Columbia

**APR 1** Southeast District CDE, Cape CTC, Cape Girardeau

**APR 2** Central District FFA LDEs, UCM, Warrensburg

**APR 2** South Central District Ag CDEs, Rolla

**APR 11** State Agriscience Fair, Columbia

**APR 15-17** State FFA Convention, Columbia



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## CHAPTER SPOTLIGHTS

# More Than a Meal

*The Warrenton FFA Chapter brings Missouri FFA Foundation Rising Sun grant to life through fifth annual meal packing event during National FFA Week.*

**A**s chapters across the state prepare for National FFA Week, the Warrenton FFA Chapter is gearing up for an impactful day packing shelf-stable, nutritious meals for families in their community. The meal packing event brings FFA members and local volunteers together for the greater good.

"FFA Week is the perfect time to celebrate the agriculture industry and the FFA organization" says Diane Miederhoff, agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor at Warrenton. "Partnering with 'Meals of Hope' for this event means all logistics are covered so members can focus on packing the meals and getting them into the hands of Warren County residents as soon as possible."

The chapter and its 100 members will pack 10,000 meals by the conclusion of the event, to be donated to AGAPE Food Pantry in Warrenton.

"AGAPE's mission is to fight hunger and prevent homelessness," Miederhoff says. "The number of people who suffer from food insecurity in Warren County continues to rise. The demand for food at the local food pantry relies heavily on food donations. This meal packing event provides a nutritionally balanced meal with minimal preparation from the consumer."

The Meals of Hope meal packing event has been hosted annually since 2022.

"We prioritize this community service because it meets a need in the community," Miederhoff says. "AGAPE Food Pantry provides food for 1,500 people each month. These shelf stable meals serve as a pantry staple throughout the year."

The event is well supported by the agricultural community.

"Our chapter applied for a Missouri Farmers Care Drive to Feed Kids Grant and received \$250," Miederhoff says. "FFA members seek support for this event by reaching out to community members and local businesses to secure sponsorships. Warrenton FFA Chapter funds are used to cover additional costs."

While the community benefits from meals packed, FFA members benefit from a sense of service and collaboration.

"The event is hands on and allows participants to see firsthand how agriculture, teamwork and service connect to help people in need," says Ava Schneider, member of the Warrenton FFA Chapter. "I am most looking forward to working alongside my fellow FFA members to be a part of something bigger than ourselves."



# Lab Time Learning

*Agricultural education students at Community R-VI explore food science through classroom lab.*

**F**rom ground beef to summer sausage and food preservation to snack sticks, agricultural education students at Community R-VI are diving deep into food science. Hands-on education is a pillar of the ag education program, made stronger in 2019 through the addition of a food science lab to enhance course offerings.

"The Food Science course is offered every other year, but food science curriculum is included in Ag Science 1, Ag Science 2 and Exploratory (7th/8th Grade) every year," says Stacy French, agricultural education teacher at Community R-VI and advisor of the Audrain County FFA Chapter. "It has a heavy emphasis on meat processing and making further processed products, including pork burger, breakfast sausage and country cured bacons."

This new addition is widely supported by the school and community.

"Our local Pork Producers donate a hog each year to fully process, and others have donated equipment,"

French says. "Our school is supportive through grants to continually upgrade our processing equipment."

The lab is equipped with two ranges, two dishwashers, a commercial three-part sink, a meat cutting band saw, commercial grinder, meat mixers, stuffers, and other small equipment like knives, handling lugs, carts, cutting boards, lab tables and mixers.

This support is then returned through community service activities.

"Our classes make whole hog sausage and bacon to use for community breakfasts for FFA Week and Veterans Day," French says. "We have even worked with community partners to make deer burger and package it for community members. We are not an inspected facility, so this is for donation only."

Students have taken a keen interest in the food science program, appreciating the hands-on approach to learning.

"I think it is a privilege we have the food science lab to explore the hands-on portion of learning about different processes of making food products," says Layton Wright, student at Community R-VI. "Without the food science lab, a lot of exciting and engaging projects could not have happened."

All classes get basic food safety and handling trainings. Other key lessons include Making Summer Sausage and Snack Sticks, Food Preservation (Dehydration), and Creating New Bacon Flavors.

"There are so many components that go into what we eat that we would never even think about," says Sophia Fennewald, student at Community R-VI. "For example, the ingredients that go into making snack sticks that enable the proteins to bond correctly."

"Plus, what's better than getting to eat your lesson at the end?" French says.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



## NAME: Ben and Elise Luebbering

### BEN

**HOMETOWN:** St. Thomas, Missouri

**FFA CHAPTER:** Fatima FFA

**COLLEGE:** University of Missouri, Agribusiness Management

**OCCUPATION:** Farmer

### ELISE

**HOMETOWN:** Curryville, Missouri

**FFA CHAPTER:** Bowling Green FFA

**COLLEGE:** University of Missouri, Agriculture

**OCCUPATION:** Freelance Marketing, Owner, Evergreen Media

**Ben and Elise Luebbering live in St. Thomas, Missouri on their family farm with their sons, Garth and Harvey. FFA shaped the Luebberings in different ways. They're sharing how below!**

**FFA TODAY:** Tell us about your involvement in agriculture.

**BEN:** I was blessed to grow up on the farm we live on today. Growing up, I enjoyed helping out on the farm feeding pigs and tending to the fields. Today, I farm full time raising pigs, cattle and crops.

**ELISE:** I grew up on my family's cattle farm in Curryville, Missouri, and played an active farm kid role my entire childhood - showing pigs and cattle, doing all 4-H and FFA things, and helping out as much as I could. Now, I'm a farm wife, raising our kids and doing as many farm things as time allows.

**FFA TODAY:** Can you share about your current occupation?

**BEN:** I farm full-time on our family farm alongside my dad, uncle and

grandparents. We run a farrow to finish pig farm as our main enterprise, but we also raise cattle and row crops including corn, soybeans and barley.

**ELISE:** My role as a mom has taken precedence over a traditional "career," but my flexible time at home has allowed me to grow my own freelance marketing business and efforts in supporting agricultural businesses in Missouri and beyond. With my background and experience in rural communities and small businesses, I understand the challenges small businesses face: long hours, tight margins, and never enough time for the things that fall outside your core work, like marketing. That is exactly why I started Evergreen Media. I am passionate about helping businesses strengthen their brand image, with a focus on social media management, but my work goes far beyond posting content. I create strategic marketing solutions that fit the real-life demands of small businesses, especially rural, agricultural, and community-focused brands.

**FFA TODAY:** What was your favorite part of FFA?

**BEN:** I always looked forward to anything that involves competition, especially Career Development Events.

**ELISE:** LDEs and CDEs

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

**BEN:** Achieving our goals is directly linked to how hard we work.

**ELISE:** Give it your all and you won't have any regrets.

**FFA TODAY:** What is your favorite memory from your time in FFA?

**BEN:** Getting the opportunity to compete in the Farm Business Management CDE at National Convention is easily my favorite memory. I really enjoyed getting to compete with my cousin Leo on my

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team, as well as having the opportunity to have my parents experience the convention with me.

**ELISE:** Attending State FFA Convention and competing in CDEs was always a highlight for me. Countless road trips to practice contests and making a lot of friends along the way also comes to mind as I reflect back on memories.

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

**BEN:** FFA helped me gain the confidence to talk to people, which has really helped me gain a lot of valuable connections I still rely on today.

**ELISE:** FFA built my confidence and inspired me to try new things.

**FFA TODAY:** Who is your biggest influence?

**BEN:** My biggest influence is my Dad. He was the main reason I was eager to join FFA after hearing of everything he got to do when he was a member. I am fortunate to get to work with him every day, as he still continues to show me what it means to work hard, think outside the box, and stand up for what you believe in.

**ELISE:** I have too many to name - my parents, grandparents, husband and friends all rank at the top.

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

**BEN:** Your time in the blue jacket is short, take every chance you get to try something new or to meet new people. You never know what you might gain from that experience.

**ELISE:** Don't shy away from something new - give it a try no matter how much it makes you cringe to think about. One day you'll look back and be glad you did!



**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**





# Heart for Teaching, Passion for Agriculture

*Lynn Dyer shares her love for the industry with others through her agricultural education SAE.*

**W**hen Lynn Dyer talks about agriculture, it's not just about crops or livestock—it's about connection. That passion recently earned the Higginsville native the National FFA Agricultural Education Proficiency Award at the 98th National FFA Convention, recognizing her commitment to teaching and advocating for agriculture beyond the traditional school day.

A graduate of Lafayette County C-1 High School, Dyer grew up surrounded by agriculture and leadership, influences she credits to her family and her time in the Higginsville FFA Chapter. With guidance from advisors Adam Brock and Courtney Chaney, she found her stride in agricultural education, discovering that her favorite part of the job was helping others see where food, farming and opportunity intersect.

Dyer's Supervised Agricultural Experience focused on working with schools and FFA programs across the state, creating engaging ways for students to learn about agriculture. From facilitating hands-on activities to planning

statewide training days, she played a key role in bringing agriculture to life for younger audiences. She also spent time coaching students behind the scenes, critiquing speeches and helping them gain confidence in sharing their own agricultural stories.

That emphasis on leadership carried over into her role as a Teen Leader for the Ag Innovators Experience, where Dyer gained real-world problem-solving skills while teaching others. The experience sharpened her ability to lead groups, adapt on the fly and make agriculture relevant to students with a wide range of interests.

Looking ahead, Dyer plans to continue building her roots in agricultural education. She is currently pursuing a degree in agricultural education at Northwest Missouri State University, with the goal of returning to the classroom one day as a high school agriculture teacher. Wherever her career takes her, she plans to stay involved in agricultural organizations that shaped her path, helping ensure the next generation has the same opportunities she did.



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# From Classroom to Kitchen

*Learn how food science labs are powering career skills in agricultural education.*

**A**gricultural education plays a vital role in preparing students for the future. By exposing students to diverse career opportunities and helping them build real-world, workforce-ready skills, students simultaneously can learn practical, every day life lessons. Across Missouri, one area where this powerful combination truly comes to life is in food science.

Over the past two years, the Missouri FFA Foundation has invested nearly \$162,000 in grant funding to support the construction, renovation and equipping of food science labs in agricultural education programs statewide. These modern learning spaces are giving students hands-on experiences that connect science, safety, nutrition and culinary skills to real careers in the food industry.

Lathrop R-2 High School is one of seven programs to receive funding to expand its food science offerings.

Agricultural educator and FFA advisor Emily Schoning outlined key goals in her grant proposal, including students demonstrating USDA-level safety protocols with 100% accuracy. Another goal focused on student development of industry-relevant skills through hands on labs and classroom instruction.



Food safety became the first major focus of instruction after local food industry professionals emphasized its importance for workforce readiness. Students studied Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) procedures and examined potential food safety hazards. They then developed their own HACCP plans for processing food products, where every student received a perfect score in following food safety protocol.

Knife skills, another industry priority, were practiced during a lab that allowed students to refine proper cutting techniques while preparing fresh ingredients.

Students also explored the science behind cooking by investigating how different preparation methods affect food texture and nutritional value.

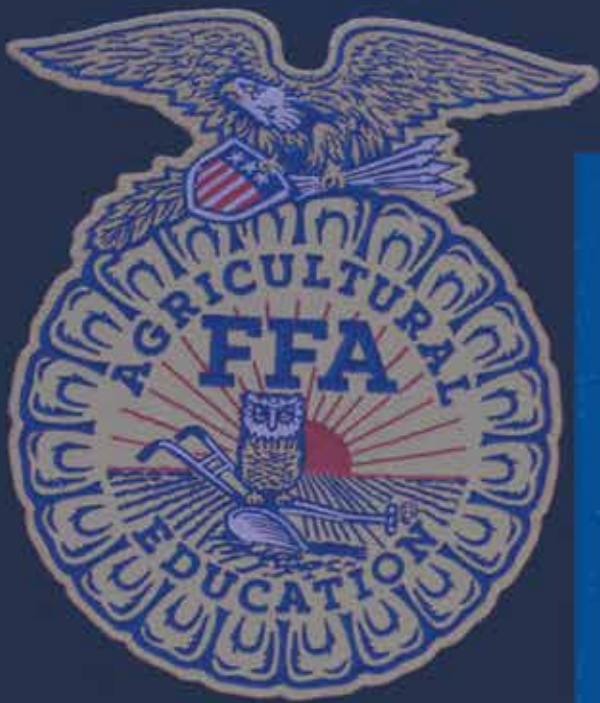
Schoning says one of the most rewarding parts of the program has been watching students' enthusiasm grow. "It's been a joy seeing students excited about their learning, the food industry and cooking," she shared. Multiple community members have expressed their keenness that students are learning skills that will serve them well both at home and in future careers.

The impact of the Missouri FFA Foundation's support has been significant. "The Rising Sun Grant has been incredibly helpful to our school," Schoning said. "The addition of the foods lab has generated a lot of interest and excitement about careers in the food industry. My principal is already discussing the possibility of adding more sections in the future. A food science lab has been a dream of mine since I started at Lathrop. None of this would have been possible without the support of the Missouri FFA Foundation."

Missouri agricultural education continues to bridge the gap between classroom learning and career readiness. If you are interested in helping equip students with skills that feed both their futures and their communities, please consider making a donation to <https://donorbox.org/moffafoundation>.



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# Vivian Jones Travels to the USA for FFA

By Addison Smith, West Plains FFA

**T**he FFA journey of Vivian Jones began differently than many others — so differently that the journey began over 3,000 miles away in the Netherlands. After learning about FFA at her school in the Netherlands, Jones knew that she wanted to get involved in the organization. With FFA on her mind, Jones took flight to the United States, and is now soaring to success.

Jones started school at the West Platte High School in the winter of 2025, halfway through her freshman year. Being the new kid in a small town isn't easy, but with heart and courage, Jones is succeeding and finding her place, both in and out of the classroom. She encourages new kids in all settings to "insert yourself

wherever you can, even if it's hard in the beginning."

Upon enrolling in the West Platte High School, Jones quickly became involved in the West Platte FFA Chapter in Missouri.

Last fall, Jones competed in public speaking. She chose the Missouri Teach Agriculture topic, which required competitors to present a speech about promoting wellness and mental health in the agricultural education field. As an aspiring agriculture teacher herself, Jones was excited to dive deeper into the field while researching her speech.

In the speech, Jones discussed the importance of supporting agriculture educators whenever possible. She also discussed the importance of

the mental health of agriculture educators, specifically during high-stress competition seasons. Jones advises students to have patience with their agriculture teacher, because you never know what they might be going through. Jones won first place and, as the 2025 Missouri Teach Agriculture State Speaking Championship winner, will deliver her speech at the 2026 Missouri State FFA Convention.

Not only is Jones a state champion in speaking, but she also advocates for agriculture in a niche way. In April 2025, she was crowned as Teen

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Miss Missouri AgHERculture. Through this position, Jones has the opportunity to serve Missouri agriculture in many ways. She has hosted many community service projects, and going into the new year, she is already planning a blood drive and a highway clean-up.

Women play an important role in the agriculture industry, and Jones shares this through her social media platform, "Behind the Boots." This platform gives young women a voice in agriculture. In each spotlight, Jones includes pictures and fun facts that the spotlighted woman is doing to promote agriculture.

"Women are making huge impacts on the industry," Jones says. "I feel like 'Behind the Boots' is a space for young women to have a spotlight to show off what they are doing in the industry."

Jones crossed the ocean to pursue her FFA dreams. Now, surrounded by a sea of blue corduroy jackets, she is exerting an influence in her home and community. Her influence can and will hold true for present and future generations of agriculturists.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Addison Smith is an FFA in the USA Reporter. Article and photos used with permission.



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# WHAT'S YOUR FFA ENERGY THIS MONTH?

1. It's cold outside and school is canceled. You're most likely...

- A. Checking on animals
- B. Sleeping until noon
- C. Layering up and heading to the shop
- D. Sending the cancellation to the FFA group chat

2. Your ideal Valentine's Day looks like:

- A. A home-cooked meal
- B. Candy and movies
- C. Working on your SAE
- D. Hanging out with friends

3. Pick a February smell:

- A. Fresh hay
- B. Hot chocolate
- C. Diesel and cold air
- D. Cookies after an FFA fundraiser

4. Your favorite FFA activity is:

- A. CDE/LDE practice
- B. Team competitions
- C. Anything outdoors
- D. Conferences and conventions

5. When something goes wrong with your project, you...

- A. Fix it yourself
- B. Research
- C. Ask your advisor or a teammate
- D. Stress

6. Your go-to winter outfit includes:

- A. Worn out boots
- B. Sweatpants and an FFA hoodie
- C. Layers that can handle cold mornings
- D. Whatever was clean that morning

7. If you could skip one thing this month, it would be:

- A. Cold morning chores
- B. Early alarms
- C. Mud season
- D. Long weeks between FFA events

8. Your chapter friends would describe you as:

- A. Reliable
- B. Laid-back
- C. Hardworking
- D. Fun

9. When you get a free day, you're most likely to:

- A. Catch up on homework
- B. Nap and snack
- C. Check on animals
- D. Hang out with friends

10. Pick a word that fits you best:

- A. Dependable
- B. Chill
- C. Driven
- D. Outgoing

---

## Results

### Mostly A's:

You're the Chapter Backbone. You're dependable, steady and always willing to help. Your chapter counts on you more than you know.

### Mostly B's:

You're the Easygoing Member. You bring calm energy and balance. You know how to enjoy FFAs without stressing over everything.

### Mostly C's:

You're the Go-Getter. Focused, motivated, and goal-driven, you're all in when it comes to SAEs, competitions and leadership.

### Mostly D's:

You're the FFA Connector. You're the energy in the room. Meetings, events and conventions are better when you're there.



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