

Missouri FFA TODAY

JUNE

ISSUE 3

2026

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2026-27 Missouri FFA State Officer Grant Cottrell was a member of the 2025 Missouri FFA HYPE Academy where he kickstarted his senior year in agricultural education.





MARK YOUR
CALENDAR!

UPCOMING events

JUN 1 - JUL 10 Missouri FFA Camp, Camp Rising Sun, Kaiser

JUN 19 Juneteenth

JUN 22 Final National Applications for Chapter Activity, Proficiency and Agriscience state winners due

JUN 23-25 HYPE Academy, Jefferson City

JUL 4 Independence Day

JUL 13 State Fair Livestock Entries Due

JUL 15 National Band, Chorus and Talent Applications Due

JUL 20-23 MO ACTE Conference, Springfield

AUG 13-23 Missouri State Fair

AUG 15 Missouri FFA Alumni & Supporters Reunion, Missouri State Fair, Sedalia

OCT 21-24 National FFA Convention & Expo



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Jordan Tucker • Buffalo

Kiley Jenkins • Mount Vernon

Kristin Waters • Norborne

Lindsey Magruder • South Shelby

Miles Neely • Lockwood

Morgan Nelson • Concordia

Stetson Stone • Centralia

Trinity Deckshage • North Shelby

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MISSOURI FFA IN ACTION



2026-27 Missouri FFA State Officer Team Installed

L to R (back): Allie Wagner, Carthage; Grant Cottrell, Washington; Miles Neely, Lockwood; Connal Anderson, Lathrop; Morgan Nelson, Concordia. L to R (middle): Kiley Jenkins, Mt. Vernon; Stetson Stone, Centralia; Allyson Burns, Perryville; Ellie Samek (President), Bolivar; Brayden Henderson, Warsaw; Lane Carter (First Vice President), Audrain Co. R-VI. L to R (front): Jordan Tucker, Buffalo; Kristin Waters, Norborne; Trinity Dreckshage, North Shelby; Madelin O'Brien (Secretary), Troy; Lindsey Magruder, South Shelby.



Scenes from State Convention

That's a wrap on Missouri FFA State Convention! We celebrated a year's worth of accomplishments with members, advisors and guests while members also competed in Career and Leadership Development Events.

Click at right to take a look! →



TO:

Paige Keith

FROM:

Concordia FFA Member

My Ag Teacher is Great Because ...

“ She is always lifting me up when I am down and believing in me. She always knows what to say and how to handle everything. She has done amazing things for the Concordia FFA and agriculture program, and we are glad to have her. You can tell when someone is in the right career path, and Ms. Keith definitely is. I know she will continue to help our program grow and complete great things. Thank you for re-lighting my FFA Spark, I would not be where I am today without you. ”



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Ellie Samek | State President

For many people, summer is a season to slow down. School doors close, schedules clear, and routines begin to fade. But in agriculture, summer is when some of the most important work begins. Across Missouri, corn rows stretch toward the sky, hay fields are cut and baled beneath the summer sun, and spring calves race through the green pastures. Agriculture does not stop for the summer, and neither do the people behind it.



That is one reason summer has always been my favorite season in FFA. While the school year may come to an end, opportunities continue to grow. From FFA Camp and chapter activities to livestock shows and long days spent working in the sun, summer becomes a season filled with hard work and unforgettable memories.

As FFA members, we are fortunate to be part of an industry that never stops growing. Every summer brings new opportunities to learn and serve. Whether you are helping on the farm, attending camp, competing in an event, or simply spending time with fellow members, there is value in every experience. The lessons you learn and friendships you build will shape you far beyond a single summer.

As summer begins, do not rush through the days ahead. Before long, the moments that feel ordinary now will become the memories you look back on most. In agriculture, growth is never instant. All summer long, crops push through changing weather and stand through long days in the heat before they can be harvested. I think people are shaped in the same way. Some of our greatest growth happens slowly in the middle of long days and hard work. Often, we don't even realize it is happening. Then one day, we look back and see just how much those moments changed us. Missouri FFA, do not overlook the ordinary days ahead. Just like the crops in the fields, we too are being shaped by the season ahead!





IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Greenhand Goals Take Shape

Grant Cottrell shares the path he took from Greenhand to State Officer.

By Addison Smith, West Plains FFA

Walking into the Area XIV Greenhand Motivational Conference (GMC) his freshman year of high school, Grant Cottrell simply felt the excitement of a day away from school. Walking out of the same conference a few hours later, Cottrell had his sights set on something bigger. He could vividly see his future within the National FFA Organization.

At that conference, Cottrell met Cody Garver, a 2022-23 Missouri FFA State Vice President. During GMCs, Garver led an activity where members were to write down three goals. As Cottrell wrote down his goals, his FFA journey quickly began to take shape. His first goal was to become a Washington FFA chapter officer, second was to become an Area XIV Officer, and third was to become a Missouri FFA State Officer.

Throughout his time in the blue jacket, Cottrell proudly served as Chapter Chaplain and Vice-President. He enjoyed taking part in new

chapter activities and working closely with chapter members in those roles.

During his senior year, Cottrell achieved his second goal of obtaining an Area officer position, serving as the Area XIV First Vice President. Through this position, Cottrell had the opportunity to lead the members and chapters of Area XIV, as well as connect with area officers from across the state of Missouri.

With one more goal to check off his list, Cottrell journeyed from Washington to Columbia to interview for a Missouri FFA state officer position. Participating in state officer interviews required faith, enthusiasm and plenty of patience. With each of these traits, and a whole lot of heart, Cottrell advanced through each of the rounds, going above and beyond in each portion.

"I felt nervous throughout the process, but overall it was an amazing experience to meet all the fellow candidates," Cottrell says.

On April 17, 2026, in the fourth

session of the 98th Missouri FFA State Convention, Cottrell was inducted as a 2026-27 Missouri FFA State Vice President while his family and fellow chapter members sat in the stands supporting him. Cottrell is excited about this position of service.

"In the coming year, I look forward to growing closer with my teammates and inspiring Missouri FFA members," Cottrell says.

With determination, Cottrell has completed each of the three goals he set for himself as a Greenhand. Just like Garver inspired Cottrell, the newly elected state officer hopes to inspire those contemplating their FFA journey and those in the midst of it. He shares the advice to "join FFA, step outside of your comfort zone and find your passion with the National FFA Organization."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Addison Smith is a 2026 State Convention Social Media Intern. Story was written as part of her social media internship.



Looking Toward the Future

Beau Ann Graves embraces the future of farming and agriculture.

Long before she was named Missouri FFA's State Star Farmer, Beau Ann Graves was learning the value of good cattle, hard work and long days spent in the barn. The Chillicothe FFA member grew up immersed in the livestock industry, developing a passion that would eventually grow into an award-winning Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE).

This spring, that dedication was recognized when Graves was named the 2026 Missouri FFA State Star Farmer during the 98th Missouri FFA State Convention.

The honor is awarded to the FFA member who demonstrates exceptional achievement in production agriculture through their SAE. For Graves, it represents years of careful planning, countless hours of labor and a commitment to continually improving her operation.

At the center of her SAE is a diverse cattle program built around

the production and marketing of purebred Angus, Hereford, Maine-Anjou, Miniature Hereford and club calf-producing cows. Her operation also includes purebred Hereford and crossbred market cattle that are fed to market weight and sold for beef production.

Looking toward the future of the cattle industry, Graves has embraced advanced reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), allowing her to increase the number of calves born each year while improving the genetic quality of her herd.

"I've always wanted to build something that continues to improve year after year," Graves says. "The opportunity to use technologies like IVF has allowed me to accelerate that progress and create cattle that are competitive both in the show ring and in production."

Her success extends beyond the pasture. Graves has become a familiar

face in show rings across the region. Those experiences have sharpened her eye for quality livestock while helping her develop the confidence and communication skills needed to succeed in the industry.

Inside the blue jacket, Graves has been equally active. During her time with the Chillicothe FFA Chapter, she has served in multiple leadership roles, competed in public speaking contests, livestock evaluation, meat evaluation, and more.

After graduation, she plans to attend Redlands Community College where she will compete on the livestock judging team while pursuing an associate degree in animal science. From there, she intends to transfer to a four-year university, continue her judging career, and earn a bachelor's degree in animal science with an emphasis in biochemistry, allowing her to stay involved in the industry in the future.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Brenden Kleiboeker

HOMETOWN: Pierce City, Missouri

FFA CHAPTER: Pierce City FFA

COLLEGE: University of Missouri,
Plant Science - Crop Management

OCCUPATION: Owner, Kleiboeker
Crop Services

FFA TODAY: Tell us a little about yourself.

BRENDEN: I am 25 years old and a third generation State FFA Officer. I graduated high school in 2019 and was the 2019-2020 Missouri FFA President. I currently live in Pierce City, MO with my wife, Baleigh. Baleigh is a high school English teacher in Pierce City. Together we own Kleiboeker Crop Services, and I oversee the day-to-day operations of the business.

FFA TODAY: Tell us about your involvement in agriculture.

BRENDEN: I have been involved in agriculture my entire life. I grew up on my family's diversified crop and livestock farm with many responsibilities from a young age. I showed pigs and cattle in 4H and FFA, as well as competing in livestock judging. My SAE focused on finishing out feeder pigs until they were market weight. In college, I worked for MFA, Inc. and also worked at the Center for Agroforestry. After

obtaining my plant science degree, I started selling Pioneer Seed with a family member until his retirement in December 2025. I now independently own and operate Kleiboeker Crop Services.

FFA TODAY: Can you share about your current occupation?

BRENDEN: Kleiboeker Crop Services is a full service Pioneer Seed dealer. We sell corn, soybeans, wheat, sorghum and sunflowers for Pioneer. I also sell various forage and grass seeds for Green Seed Company. We also custom treat seed. We provide soil grid sampling services, as well as fertilizer recommendations and data management services for local farmers.

FFA TODAY: What was your favorite part of FFA?

BRENDEN: My favorite part of FFA was CDE and LDE events. I enjoyed learning new skills and gaining new knowledge while getting to compete against friends from other schools.

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

BRENDEN: I was involved in anything and everything in FFA. I went to Camp, was an area officer as well as State FFA President. I competed in various fall speaking contests, as well as Creed Speaking, Prepared Public Speaking and Extemporaneous Public Speaking. I competed in FFA Knowledge, Poultry, Horses, and Livestock Judging as well. At the chapter level, I was involved in numerous service projects.

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

BRENDEN: The greatest lesson I learned was that you get out what you put in. I was blessed with a lot of success in FFA, but that did not come natural. My freshman year, I continually read the FFA Manual time and time again to prepare for the FFA

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Knowledge contest. I would practice speeches for months on end to fine tune them so I could give them the best possible. These lessons still help me in my life and career.

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

BRENDEN: FFA camp holds some of my fondest memories in FFA. I met some of my very best friends at FFA Camp freshman year and at HYMAX, which is held at Camp Rising Sun. As a state officer, Camp was a blast meeting members from all over the state. Completing the “table challenge” with my friend Matthew Morgan was also noteworthy. FFA Camp is a very special place to me still to this day.

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

BRENDEN: FFA impacted me

through the countless connections I made. Those connections helped me throughout college and in my career. There are very few places I go in the midwest where I do not share a mutual connection with somebody, and I owe that to FFA.

FFA TODAY: Who is your biggest influence?

BRENDEN: Brian Bunton from Lamar, MO is my greatest influence. He was my mentor when I interned for Pioneer, and he is now a fellow Pioneer dealer. Brian is a good, hardworking, Christian man who I strive to be like. I, myself, was an oldest child, but Brian is about 9 years older than me. He has an older sibling style influence on me and my life, and I know I can always reach out for any advice needed personally or professionally.

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

BRENDEN: Work hard, but have fun. I am guilty to this day of often working



too hard and not taking time for the world around me. Stop and smell the roses and enjoy the journey, because none of those accomplishments mean anything if you can't enjoy getting there.



Whether you are raising livestock, leading your chapter, or planning for a career in agriculture, the experiences you gain today shape the leader you will become tomorrow.

We are proud to support Missouri's next generation of agricultural leaders through scholarships, internships, and project funding designed specifically for FFA and 4-H members.

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STATE OFFICER BLOG

Turning Down the Radio

By Madeline O'Brien, Missouri FFA State Secretary

A few weeks ago, I was driving home from state officer training in Jefferson City to attend my local scholarship night. This drive, however, was far from smooth. I got caught in one of the worst rainstorms I have ever driven through. The rain was falling so hard I could barely see the lines on the road or make out the taillights of the car in front of me. In just a few minutes, the road went from familiar to unrecognizable.

Almost instinctively, I found myself reaching over to turn down the radio. Now, I knew that simply turning down the radio was not going to change the rate at which the rain pelted to the ground around me, but what I did know was that everything else already felt so overwhelming. I turned the radio down because I did not need unnecessary noise competing for my attention when the road was already so unclear. After turning down the distractions, I could

focus on what was right in front of me.

As I thought back to this car ride, I realized how often we could benefit from doing the same thing in life.

As FFA members, we are constantly surrounded by noise. We compare ourselves to those we deem more successful. We worry about giving the perfect speech, picking up on the rules of a new contest, getting the officer position or simply figuring out what comes next. We struggle with not knowing exactly what will happen in the future, especially when we feel like those around us already have it all figured out.

When we decide to listen to the noise, our first instinct is often to look ahead. We want answers, and we want certainty, a step-by-step guide that will get us to where we think we need to be. But sometimes, what we really need is to turn down the radio. We need to quiet the distractions and comparisons so we can give

our attention to the opportunities already in front of us: the next chapter activity, the next contest or the next step in an SAE.

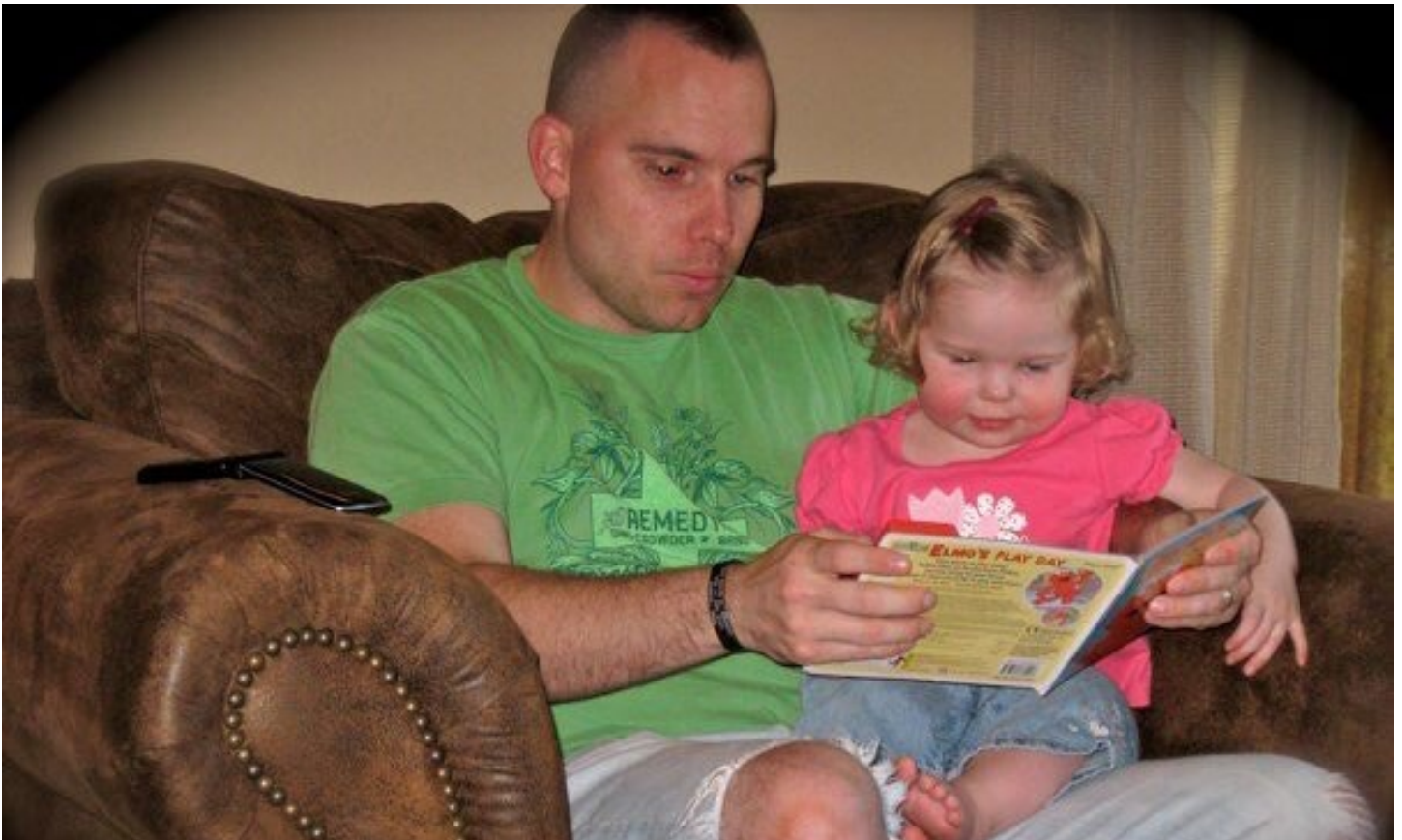
Despite the appeal of the certainty that seems to accompany the future, I have found there is always a chance to grow when you choose to live in the moment. That rainy drive home from Jefferson City reminded me that clarity is not always about being able to see farther. Sometimes it is about turning down the distractions so you can focus more fully on what matters right now.

Missouri FFA, do not let the noise prevent you from finding joy in the present, and do not let it convince you that you must have it all figured out. Sometimes all we need to do is be okay with turning down the radio.



Generations of Service

In April, Joanna Rhea of Sweet Springs, was named the first recipient of the Glen Fletcher Scholarship. She recently shared her story about growing up, being involved in FFA and her future plans with the Missouri FFA Foundation.



FOUNDATION: Tell us a little about yourself.

JOANNA: I live with my mom and my younger sister on a small farm in Sweet Springs where we raise hogs and chickens and have many indoor animals. When I was young, we lived in Liberty. In 2018, my family moved to my mom's hometown to be closer to her family. Moving here has been one of the greatest things to happen in my life because it introduced me to agriculture. It sparked a passion for both animals and for the life of a small town community. I learned how to do simple tasks like cooking, gardening, canning and so much more. Living on the farm has also taught me strength,

patience and determination. There are many years that go unexpected. It is your job to continue on, hard as it may become.

FOUNDATION: Why did you choose to enroll in agricultural education classes and join FFA?

JOANNA: I decided to start my education in agriculture at the beginning of my freshman year of high school. I mainly signed up for the class because my family has been a part of agriculture and FFA for many generations. I felt that it was my duty to continue the tradition. I quickly fell in love with animals and the agricultural industry. I learned about

the hardships that agriculturalists face daily and how important they are to America and the world. This appreciation and passion only grew as I competed and participated in many FFA events, which included: Public Speaking, Parliamentary Procedure, Agricultural Issues, State Convention, National Convention, Washington Leadership Conference, and many agriculture related summer camps hosted by the University of Missouri. I also developed an SAE project during my time in FFA. My SAE is classified as both Swine Entrepreneurship and Swine Placement. In this project, I

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breed and raise my own herd of swine and help my grandfather and great uncle with their operations in an exchange of labor agreement.

FOUNDATION: What are your future plans?

JOANNA: My SAE is the reason I want to be a veterinarian. Being exposed to the breeding and health aspects of livestock was a clear sign to me that I was meant to help animals. I plan to attend Kansas State University, pursuing a bachelor's degree in animal sciences. I will then apply to schools of veterinary medicine to earn a doctorate. My ultimate goal is to return to Saline County and have a practice helping local livestock and companion animals.

FOUNDATION: Why did you apply for the Glen Fletcher scholarship?

JOANNA: My father, Sergeant First Class Trenton L. Rhea, served in the United States Army from 2000 until 2013. On May 15, 2013, he was killed in action in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Through stories of his life, I know my father was a quiet, humble man, valuing how he treated others. I strive to live my life in that way as well. My mom has always tried her best to make sure that my sister and I have all that we need. She has a full-time and part-time job, but as a single parent, it can be a challenge to manage regular expenses, let alone college tuition. This scholarship is one way I can take away some of my mom's worry and reduce the amount of debt I have when I graduate. I want to contribute to my community in the future. This scholarship is going to help achieve that goal.

ABOUT THE GLEN FLETCHER SCHOLARSHIP

The Glen Fletcher Scholarship fund was created to honor Lt. Commander Robert Glenn Fletcher, Jr. who passed away from pancreatic cancer in 2025. Glen grew up in Chesterfield, Missouri. He was a combat veteran who demonstrated a commitment to mentoring fellow veterans and youth. Glen's wife Heather grew up on a farm. When they married, he developed a deep interest in agriculture. To honor his interests and life of service, his family and friends created this scholarship for students connected to agriculture who grew up in an urban community, or have a personal or parent involved in the military, or have been impacted by cancer. To learn more about creating a scholarship fund with the Missouri FFA Foundation, please email heather@missouriffa.org.





A Family Legacy: Wesley Summers' Excellence in Palmyra FFA

By Marissa Gottman, Palmyra FFA

The Palmyra FFA Chapter's legacy of excellence is displayed in the iconic "Hall of Champions." Stretching the length of the newly renovated ag building, the hall is decorated with celebratory plaques honoring members' talent and hard work. In good humor, there is even a dreaded, and nearly vacant, "So Close!" wall designated for teams placing fourth and fifth.

Amongst decorated Palmyra FFA members, Wesley Summers shines especially bright. After joining FFA his freshman year, Summers' admirable work ethic has forged an outstanding Career Development Event (CDE) career, Supervised Agricultural

Experience (SAE) project and legacy in Palmyra FFA.

Continuing the Family Legacy

Summers' investment in agriculture began in his youth. Raised on a family farm, he developed an inborn fondness for the joys and discomforts of agricultural endeavors from a young age. In third grade, Summers joined a local 4-H chapter, enriching his knowledge and curiosity of the industry.

Following his family's Palmyra FFA legacy — including both his father and elder sister serving as chapter president — Summers enrolled in agriculture science his

freshman year. Over the course of his high school career, his SAE in sheep production flourished from a single ewe to about 20 head. In five years of showing, his prized lambs have earned several titles, including Reserve Champion Market Lamb (Marion County Fair), Fifth Place Market Lamb (Missouri State Fair Showdown) and Reserve State Champion Shropshire Market Lamb.

Summers expressed a continued commitment to his sheep enterprise.

"I intend to continue raising

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and selling show lambs that will be competitive at every level,” he says.

Summers’ Success in CDEs

In addition to his outstanding SAE, Summers recently made Palmyra FFA history by becoming the first individual to win state and compete at National FFA Convention three times. His CDE career includes:

- 9th grade: Entomology (gold individual & ninth place state team)
- 10th grade: Food Science (second high individual, state champion team and eighth place national team)
- 11th grade: Floriculture (ninth high individual, state champion team and national gold individual)
- 12th grade: Farm Management (sixth high individual, state champion team)

“Being a three-time state champion with top 10 individual placings all three times is no small

feat,” says Amanda Haeberlin, Palmyra agricultural education teacher and FFA advisor. “Obviously, his scores are impressive, but what I find more impressive and what has had the most impact on his teams is his drive for success and his work ethic.”

As Summers’ teacher, coach and mentor, Haeberlin admires the way he “pushes himself and others to do their absolute best,” she adds.

The Dirt Road Ahead

Though Summers graduated in May, his dedication to agriculture will continue. This fall, he will compete in the National Farm Management CDE while enrolled in Missouri State Technical School’s Electrical Distribution Systems program. His hard work has earned him \$1,500 in chapter scholarships to support his higher education, along with the title of the 2026 Star Farmer.

“I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him over

the last few years, and look forward to seeing where the qualities that made him successful in CDEs take him in the future,” Haeberlin says.

Summers intends to pursue a career as a lineman while continuing the legacy of his family farm. When asked why students should join FFA, he expressed his appreciation for the organization’s “opportunities in all aspects.” Summers’ family, friends and chapter are immensely proud of his accomplishments and eager to support his bright future from the sidelines.

Illustrated by years of excellence, Summers truly embodies the values of the Palmyra FFA Chapter.

EDITOR’S NOTE: *Marissa Gottman is an FFA in the USA Reporter. Story and photo were used with permission.*



MISSOURI FFA
Foundation

Missouri FFA Alumni & Supporters' Reunion

August 15, 2026
Missouri State Fairgrounds
Taylor Woods Building
4:00-6:00 p.m.

Register at:
<https://donorbox.org/events/762201>
or scan the QR Code below:



MISSOURI FFA TRIVIA

Test your knowledge of agriculture and facts from across the Show-Me State!

1. Which crop is Missouri's largest cash crop by acreage?

- A. Cotton
- B. Rice
- C. Soybeans
- D. Wheat

2. Approximately how many farms are located in Missouri?

- A. 25,000
- B. 50,000
- C. 87,000
- D. 150,000

3. Missouri ranks among the top producing states in the production of which livestock species?

- A. Sheep
- B. Goats
- C. Hogs
- D. Alpacas

4. What is Missouri's official state tree?

- A. White Oak
- B. Dogwood
- C. Eastern Red Cedar
- D. Shortleaf Pine

5. Which region of Missouri is known for beef cattle production and pastureland?

- A. Bootheel
- B. Ozarks
- C. St. Louis Metro Area
- D. Mississippi River Bluffs

6. What Missouri City is home to the Missouri State Fair?

- A. Columbia
- B. Sedalia
- C. Jefferson City
- D. Springfield

7. Missouri's Bootheel region is known for producing which crops?

- A. Apples and grapes
- B. Cotton and rice
- C. Potatoes and onions
- D. Peanuts and sugarcane

8. Which river valley is famous for its grape and wine industry?

- A. Missouri River Valley
- B. Osage River Valley
- C. Grand River Valley
- D. Current River Valley

DID YOU KNOW?

There are
30,454
agricultural
education
students in
Missouri

9. Which Missouri university is the state's land-grant institution and is well known for agricultural research and education?

- A. Missouri State University
- B. Truman State University
- C. University of Missouri
- D. Southeast Missouri State University

10. Missouri is one of the nation's leading producers of which nut crop?

- A. Almonds
- B. Pecans
- C. Walnuts
- D. Hazelnuts

ANSWER KEY

- 1. C
- 2. C
- 3. C
- 4. B
- 5. B
- 6. B
- 7. B
- 8. A
- 9. C
- 10. B



