# Missouri FFA TODAY

AUGUST / ISSUE 4 / 2026

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**2026 State Star in Agribusiness Quin Staten wears many hats in his lawn care business, including mechanic.**

# UPCOMING events

**AUG 13-23** Missouri State Fair

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

**SEPT 7** Labor Day

**SEPT 9** National Convention Registration Opens

**SEPT 11** State PAS Leadership Conference, State Fair Community College

**SEPT 17** National Teach Ag Day

**OCT 1** National FFA SAE Grant Online Application Opens

**OCT 12** Columbus Day

**OCT 21-24** National FFA Convention & Expo, Indianapolis

**NOV 2** National FFA Scholarship Online Application Opens

**NOV 11** Veterans Day

**NOV 26** Thanksgiving Day

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# MISSOURI FFA IN ACTION

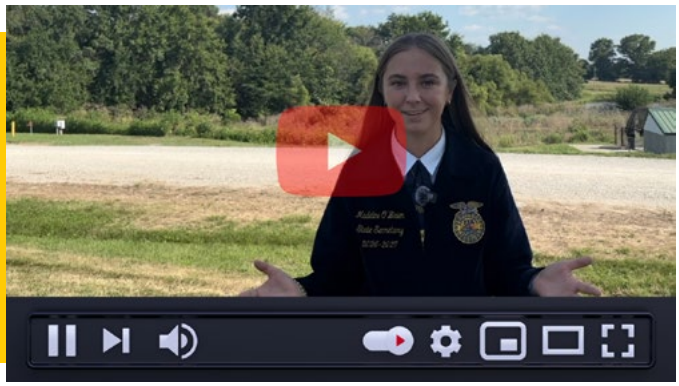
### Ava FFA Pickleball Tournament

Members of the Ava FFA Chapter roundedout a busy summer with their Second Annual Pickleball Tournament. State President Ellie Samek , State Secretary Madeline O'Brien and State Vice Presidents Connal Anderson and Morgan Nelson jioned them for the fun-filled competition.

### Opportunities Ahead

**Missouri FFA members throughout the state are beginning a new school year filled with opportunities in agricultural education and FFA. Your Missouri FFA State officers are sending encouragement for the year ahead.**

**Click at right to take a look!**



**TO:**
Taylor Strain

**FROM:**
Newburg FFA Member

## My Ag Teacher is Great Because ...

"She treats us with respect, not like little kids. She is always in our corner and stands up for us. She always checks on us to make sure we are okay. She loves , and she never lets us forget that. She is the best teacher Newburg has, and I love having her as my teacher."

TAGGED TO TEACH AG

# PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

## Ellie Samek | State President

Growing up, every spring looked the same. Before daylight, my dad and grandpa would climb into their green John Deere tractors. In the cab sat coffee cups that would rattle as the planter unfolded behind them. As they pulled into the field, the sun would stretch across the horizon, casting a golden glow over the rows waiting to be planted. From the buddy seat, the rhythm rarely changed. Pass after pass, I watched 30,000 seeds disappear beneath the soil in every acre. The weeks that followed brought field checks, fertilizer spreaders and weather forecasts. Some years brought rain and others didn't, but every season was met with the same commitment to giving those 30,000 seeds the best opportunity to grow.

By mid-summer, our fields looked completely different. The work invested over weeks would finally begin to show. Around that same time, another season of preparation was unfolding across Missouri. At this year's Missouri Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association Summer Conference, I walked through the halls filled with ag educators from every corner of the state. The conversations flowed into ideas that would soon find their way into classrooms, SAEs and their FFA programs.

That preparation was only a glimpse of the dedication. At Camp Rising Sun, there was always an advisor ready to give one more boat ride. After a full day at Public Speaking Academy, there was always an advisor willing to give one last piece of advice. Others traveled gravel roads to visit SAE projects, planned chapter retreats, coordinated industry tours and opened doors to countless opportunities. Those moments are more than summer activities; they are the foundation for the years ahead.

This fall, more than 30,000 students will walk into Missouri agricultural education classrooms. That is 30,000 opportunities, 30,000 futures and 30,000 reasons to believe in the future of agriculture. Much like all 30,000 seeds planted in every acre on our family farm, each student and member started with someone willing to invest in their future. For that investment made by our ag educators, Missouri agriculture will continue to grow for generations to come.

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# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

# Building a New Community

*How Madison Cole, School of the Osage, is growing leadership and community through FFA.*

*By Hannah Beanland, University of Missouri*

Madison Cole, president of the School of the Osage FFA Chapter, is helping lead a new FFA chapter and agricultural education program while discovering her own path in agriculture. As part of a first-year chapter in the Lake of the Ozarks area, Cole has played a key role in building a sense of community among students interested in agricultural education, many of whom come from non-traditional backgrounds.

"FFA has created a sense of belonging in our community that wasn't there before," Cole says.

**Creating Connections Through FFA**

Through her involvement in FFA, Cole has connected with a wide range of people who share her values and curiosity about agriculture. She credits the organization with creating a space that previously did not exist in her community, giving students a place to belong and explore agricultural opportunities.

"We've been able to bring together people who share a passion for agriculture, even in a non-traditional way," she says.

**Finding Confidence Through Public Speaking**

Cole's personal growth has been especially evident in her public speaking. After stepping outside of her comfort zone to compete in fall public speaking events without the use of visual aids, she quickly developed the confidence and skills needed to communicate effectively.

"Through speaking competitions, I've found confidence in my voice that I didn't have before," Cole explains.

Her efforts paid off when she won at the area level and advanced to the district competition. While she did not place at districts, Cole views the experience as a valuable lesson in resilience.

"You don't win everything you do, but it's all a learning experience, and sometimes those losses are more important than your wins," Cole says, emphasizing that growth often comes more from setbacks than successes.

**Exploring Career Paths in Agriculture**

In addition to speaking competitions, Cole has participated in Career Development Events (CDEs) and other contests, such as the Veterinary Science CDE and Swine Facility Management contest. Most recently, she conducted an agriscience research project on non-woven biocomposites, earning a bronze rating at the National Agriscience Fair.

These experiences have broadened her understanding of agriculture and helped shape her future goals.

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"FFA opened my eyes to the many different paths within agriculture," she says.

**Attending State Convention**

Cole's FFA journey has also taken her to the State FFA Convention, where she had the opportunity to meet other passionate members and compete in extemporaneous speaking. As a state finalist, Cole continues to push herself while embracing every opportunity to learn and improve.

"Being surrounded by people who share my passion for agriculture is incredibly inspiring," she says.

**Learning to Lead**

Leading a first-year chapter has come with many uncertainties, but Cole and her officer team have risen to the challenge. With members from both traditional and non-traditional agricultural backgrounds, the team has learned to collaborate, communicate and support one another.

"Leadership isn't about telling people what to do, it's about listening, understanding and working together," Cole says.

She credits much of the chapter's success to the guidance of their advisor, Mr. Jacob Blank, who has encouraged members to step outside of their comfort zones and take on new challenges.

"Having someone who believes in you makes all the difference when you're trying something new," Cole adds.

His support has helped the team understand the broader impact of FFA, not only within their chapter and community, but also in preparing them for future careers.

**Looking Ahead**

Through her experiences, Cole has developed skills in leadership, teamwork and communication that will serve her well, far beyond FFA. As the School of the Osage chapter continues to grow, she remains committed to fostering a welcoming environment and inspiring others to get involved in agriculture.

"As a first-year chapter, we're building something bigger than ourselves," Cole says.

Members strive to uphold the chapter's motto: "Creating a Legacy at the Lake."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Hannah Beanland is a 2026 State Convention Social Media Intern. Story was written as part of her social media internship. Photos provided by School of the Osage FFA Advisor Jacob Blank.*

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## Ryan Siegel

**HOMETOWN:** Otterville, Missouri

**FFA CHAPTER:** Otterville FFA

**COLLEGE:** University of Missouri, Agricultural Education B.S. | West Virginia University, Digital Marketing Communications M.S.

**OCCUPATION:** Associate Director of Marketing Communications, Missouri Soybean Association

**FFA TODAY:** Tell us a little about yourself.

**RYAN:** I grew up on a diversified farm in central Missouri, where my family raised dairy cattle, beef cattle, hogs, soybeans, corn and wheat. Throughout high school, I was active in both FFA and FBLA. After serving at the chapter, area and state levels in both organizations, I had the opportunity to serve as a National FBLA officer before returning to serve as a Missouri FFA state officer.

When I started at Mizzou, I planned to pursue a STEM-focused career as a plant science major. After taking Sharon Wood-Turley's Introduction to Agricultural Journalism course, I realized I was passionate about communications and helping make complex agricultural topics understandable and engaging.

In college, I became involved in Ag Communicators of Tomorrow, eventually serving as national treasurer. I also interned with the Missouri Department of Agriculture in Agricultural Business Development and with Farm Journal as a marketing intern.

After graduation, I worked as a project manager for Farm Journal before joining the Missouri Soybean Association in 2021. Since then, I've served as a communications coordinator, creative marketing manager, marketing communications manager and now Associate Director of Marketing Communications. My work focuses on strategic communications, branding, publications, digital media, campaigns and educational outreach.

Outside of work, I enjoy reading, writing, traveling and catching up on the latest movies and television series.

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

**RYAN:** Agriculture has been part of my life from day one. Growing up on a family farm, participating in FFA and now working professionally in agricultural communications has allowed me to experience the industry from many different perspectives. Today, I have the privilege of supporting Missouri farmers through my work while also giving back to FFA by volunteering as a judge at local, district and state contests whenever I can.

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

**RYAN:** As Associate Director of Marketing Communications for the Missouri Soybean Association, I lead strategic communications that strengthen the voice of Missouri soybean farmers and connect agriculture with consumers, policymakers and industry partners.

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

**RYAN:** The relationships. Some of my closest friends today are people I met through FFA, and the network I built through the organization was invaluable as I began my career. The older I get, the more I realize just how interconnected the agricultural community really is.

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

**RYAN:** I competed in Dairy Foods (thanks to my love of Napoleon Dynamite), Poultry, D2, Advanced Public Speaking, where I placed fifth at state, and Job Interview. I also earned a second place state

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Dairy Production Entrepreneurship Proficiency award and was an area winner in Agricultural Education and Dairy Placement. I was also a big fan of PSA and PSI.

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

**RYAN:** FFA taught me how to adapt. In high school, I liked having a plan and knowing exactly what came next. FFA constantly challenged me to think on my feet, embrace uncomfortable situations and trust that I could figure things out.

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

**RYAN:** My parents. They gave me the freedom to try new things, make mistakes and learn from them while supporting me along the way. My dad instilled a strong work ethic that I rely on every day, and my mom nurtured my creativity and appreciation for design, both of which have become central to my career.

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

**RYAN:** Don't be afraid to try something that scares you. Growth almost always comes from being uncomfortable, and failure is often the best teacher you'll ever have. Support the people around you, celebrate your competitors as much as your friends and say yes to opportunities, even if you're not sure you're ready.

And one final piece of advice for every public speaker: do the Hokey Pokey before you walk into the room. It sounds ridiculous, but it'll loosen you up, make you smile and just might save your speech.

# STATE OFFICER BLOG

# Not Me, But Them

*By Miles Neely, Missouri FFA State Vice President*

Growing up, I kept myself busy in the winters by playing basketball for my school. Every single week from third grade to eighth, November to February, Monday through Friday, you could find me at basketball practice in the afternoon alongside my classmates.

While I enjoyed spending time with my friends and the satisfaction of winning a well-fought game, I dreaded actually having to play basketball. Lacing up my shoes, running through warm-ups and scrimmaging against my teammates was just not fun.

I remember returning from practice one night feeling absolutely defeated. I threw myself onto the couch and told my parents I hated playing basketball. My parents encouraged me to change my mindset. They told me I wasn't just playing basketball for myself. My coaches and teammates needed me, and I should continue playing for the people around me. After all, I was the tallest kid on the team, and I knew my teammates trusted me. So from that point on, I shifted my focus to the people around me. Realizing that I wasn't the only one going through practices and the long seasons made enjoying myself much easier.

As FFA members, I hope we live by a similar mindset. Service to those around us is what gives our lives meaning and purpose. Our year ahead of us will be full of speeches, contests and moments that test our patience and commitment. Through all of these moments, I urge you to focus on those around you. Whether it's the other members of your chapter, your advisor or the community you've found in FFA, your service to them is what will make your year meaningful.

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47 COOPERATIVES ACROSS THE STATE

**JOIN OUR COOPERATIVE FAMILY**

# Through Every Challenge: Our Advisor's Dedication

*By Khloe Durham, Climax Springs FFA*

Our advisors do everything from A to Z to keep us on track. From early morning drives to big news, bad news and even late-night conversations, they have done it all. From being all dressed up to crying in pajama pants, our advisors are like our second parents. Since starting my FFA experience, I have spent more time with my advisor than my actual family most of the time.

My advisor, Joni Fields, has done so much for our chapter and every single person involved in it. Ms. Fields started this chapter from the ground up and has conquered every problem and obstacle she has faced since starting the chapter.

"My greatest struggle throughout my time at the Climax Springs FFA Chapter was the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic," Fields says.

COVID-19 happened during the very first year our chapter started at Climax Springs. This brought many challenges for Ms. Fields and our chapter, including growing membership, building relationships, hosting events and so much more. Even with all of these challenges and obstacles in the way, Ms. Fields stayed determined and continuously worked hard to give our members every opportunity possible to succeed.

If you have talked to Ms. Fields in the past couple of months, you would know she is extremely excited about the future of our agriculture program. This is because a new shop is being built.

"I am excited for this new addition because it will give students more opportunities to grow, build new relationships, learn new things and participate in hands-on learning opportunities," Fields says. "This addition will help the chapter continue creating knowledgeable members who will be successful in the future."

Regardless of everything else, Ms. Fields loves seeing both the chapter's successes and the recognition her students receive for their accomplishments. She is constantly working to make sure her students feel supported, appreciated and encouraged. Through all the laughs, hard work, hectic days and constant challenges, Ms. Fields is always inspiring everyone around her. Whether it is through a tough talk or a laugh, she always manages to make a lasting impact on the people around her.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Khloe Durham is an FFA in the USA Reporter. Story and photo were used with permission.*

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# Small Business Success

*How State Star in Agribusiness Quin Staten turned a gap in his community into a successful small business, learning the joys and struggles of entrepreneurship along the way.*

At just ten years old, Quin Staten of the Tarkio FFA Chapter started with a mower, a few yards and a passion for filling a need in his community. What began as a small lawn mowing operation with his father grew into Q & M Mowing, a full-service lawn care and landscaping business serving customers across Atchison County.

Over the next several years, Staten transformed his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) into a thriving agribusiness. He expanded his services to include mowing, debris removal, gutter cleaning, fertilizer application, pruning, landscaping, leaf cleanup, flower bed design and more. Before his freshman year, Staten bought out his father and took responsibility for managing the business himself. He learned that owning a business meant much more than working with his hands. It also meant managing finances, advertising, customer relationships, employees, equipment and looking toward long-term growth.

Like any small business owners, Staten has faced challenges along the way, including building a dependable crew and navigating the limitations of a visual impairment he has had since birth. Rather than allowing those challenges to determine what he could accomplish, the young entrepreneur found ways to adapt and continued building a business that reflected his determination and work ethic.

His attention to detail has helped set Q & M Mowing apart. Professional equipment, carefully maintained machinery, sharp blades, efficient daily planning and strong communication with employees allowed the business to take on larger and more demanding projects. Behind the scenes, Staten learned QuickBooks to manage payroll, invoices, taxes, profit and loss statements, all allowing him to confidently make major business decisions.

Years of hard work, growth and perseverance led Staten to be named Missouri FFA's 2026 State Star in Agribusiness.

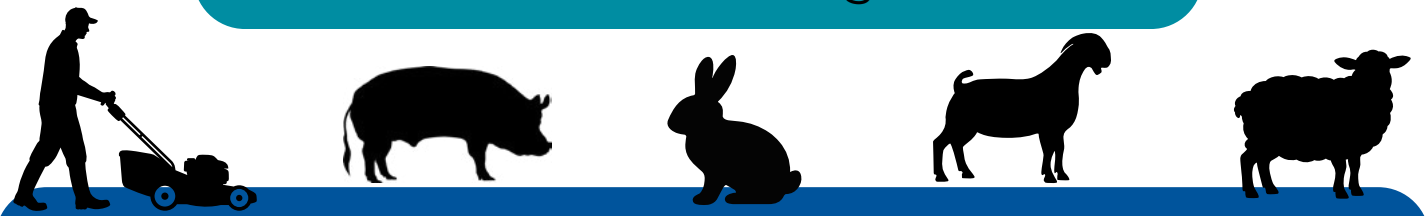
The award represents far more than a title. It recognizes the ten-year-old boy who started with a mower, the young entrepreneur who refused to let obstacles define him and the FFA member who turned a simple idea into a successful agricultural business. Staten's journey proves that with vision, determination, and a willingness to work, a small idea can grow into something powerful that serves community members along the way.

MISSOURI FFA Foundation

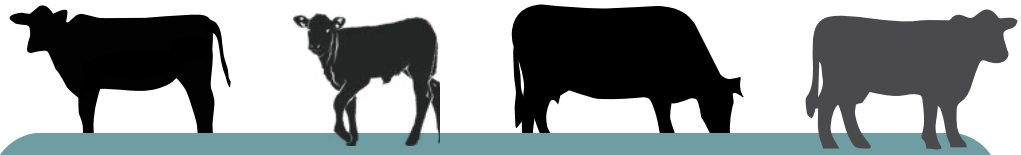
This year, thirty-two Missouri FFA Members started or expanded their supervised agriculture experience thanks in part to a grant from the Missouri FFA Foundation. These grants ranging from $500-$1000 helped students from across the state develop a wide range of businesses. One of those members, Wyatt Selsor from Savannah FFA, shares, “SAE grants are important because they provide a really strong foundation. That type of foundation gets your confidence going. It helps you set more goals and become more disciplined towards achieving those goals.” Below is a glimpse of the types of projects funded this year. The next round of grant applications open in October which makes now a perfect time to begin planning what you could do with your SAE with an infusion of capital.

One Agribusiness, Agricommunications, Beekeeping, Welding & Bait/Vermicast

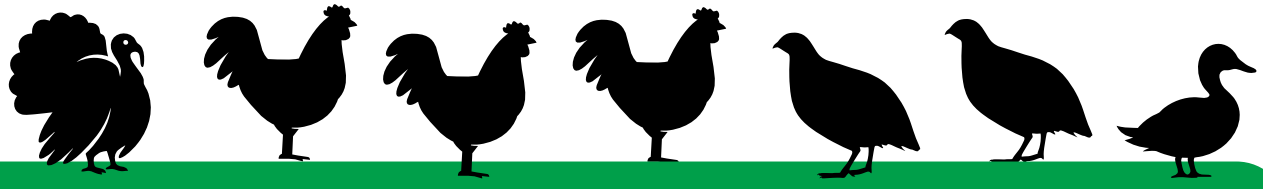
Two Plant Science & Agriscience



Three Turf Maintenance, Swine, Rabbits, Goats & Sheep



Four Beef Cattle



Seven Poultry: Chicken, Ducks Quail & Turkey

SAE grants are currently possible thanks to gifts from the MFA Inc. Charitable Foundation and the Missouri Sheep Merchandising Council. Anyone can support SAE grants by making a donation to the Missouri FFA Foundation at https://donorbox.org/moffafoundation.

# MISSOURI STATE FAIR TRIVIA

*The Missouri State Fair marks the end of summer for many. Test your fair knowledge below!*
*Trivia provided by Missouri State Fair interns, photo by Missouri State Fair Foundation.*

**1. What year was the Missouri State Fair founded?**

A. 1901

B. 1910

C. 1903

D. 2002

**2. How manu competitive entries did the Missouri State Fair have in 2025?**

A. 28,362

B. 21,067

C. 21,246

D. 28,173

**3. What is the top-rated fair food?**

A. Corndog

B. Fried Oreos

C. Tiger Stripe Ice Cream

D. Cheese on a Stick

**4. How many meals did Missouri FFA members pack during the 2025 Drive to Feed Kids Day?**

A. 178,000

B. 176,000

C. 169,000

D. 170,000

**5. Who is the Missouri State Fair Mascot?**

A. Peppa the Pig

B. Bart the Mule

C. Shelly the Sheep

D. Devon the Donkey

**6. Where is the retiring 2025 Missouri State Fair Queen from?**

A. Sweet Springs, MO

B. Paris, MO

C. Warrenton, MO

D. Chillicothe, MO

**7. Where can you find the Missouri Top 50 at the State Fair?**

A. Fine Art Building

B. Home Economics Building

C. Floriculture Building

D. Agriculture Building

**8. What year was the Coliseum built?**

A. 1910

B. 1908

C. 1905

D. 1906

## DID YOU KNOW?

The State Fair's famous **butter cow** tradition dates back to **1911**

**9. How many pounds of butter is the Missouri State Fair Butter Cow made from?**

A. 700

B. 750

C. 600

D. 650

**10. Who is the director of the Missouri State Fair?**

A. Governor Mike Kehoe

B. Director of Agriculture Chris Chinn

C. Rhiannon Birdwell

D. Jason Moore

## ANSWER KEY

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

# Beef for Blue

MISSOURI FFA

*Investing in the future of agriculture*

## What is Beef for Blue?

The Beef for Blue program, offers Missouri's cattle producers an efficient way to invest in Missouri FFA members and Agricultural Education activities related to beef production by pledging 50 cents per head of cattle sold to be donated to the Missouri FFA Foundation. (Some sale barns may also offer the option of a specific dollar amount donation.)

## Where does the money go?

Donations generated through the Beef for Blue program fund grants for agricultural education students to start or expand a supervised agriculture experience (SAE) project related to beef cattle production, agriculture advocacy training for FFA members, and leadership workshops and skills development opportunities for agriculture education students across the state.

*Starts Sept. 1*

## How does it work?

1) A sale barn registers with the Missouri FFA Foundation to be a Beef for Blue partner site and receives program signs.

2) As a part of check-in, the producer lets the sale barn know they would like to participate in Beef for Blue for that load of cattle. (Some sale barns may also allow post sale pledges. Producers may also make a donation directly to the Missouri FFA Foundation.)

3) The sale barn deducts the pledged amount before paying out the producer and sends that money to the foundation, along with the name and contact information of the producer. (This process reduces the producer's tax liability.)

4) The Missouri FFA Foundation will send the producer a thank you note and recognize the contribution through the individual giving program.

*My SAE grant was important because it helped me afford and improve my beef production project by covering costs like feed, calves, and vet care while also teaching me real-world skills like budgeting, responsibility, and managing livestock.*

DALLIA JOHNSON
Salem FFA

**For questions or additional information, please email foundationinfo@missouriffa.org.**

**To make a direct donation or for a list of participating sale barns, please visit: https://donorbox.org/beef4blue**

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