

FEATURING:

- Ag Legislative Day
- Meats CDE
- Cemetery Clean-Up
- District Proficiencies
- WCFA Conference
- Ski/Water Park Trip

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Issue

Monthly Newsletter of the Athens IL FFA Chapter



ATHENS IL
FFA CHAPTER

Members of the Month

This month's members of the month are Greenhand Vice President Melodie Starkey and Chapter Treasurer Jacqueline Stuebs.

Both have shown extraordinary displays of leadership within the chapter worthy to take note of. Melodie leads through participating in the chapter newscast as a reporter and by taking time to fill out Foundation Committee letters. Jacque keeps track of the chapter finances and has been an integral part of many CDE teams like Agronomy, Meats, and many more.

Congratulations to both recipients. Even though our year is coming to an end, keep up the good work!



Meet Victoria Maloch

2014-2015 NATIONAL FFA SECRETARY



What qualities are required to hold an office at the National level?

The eight major categories of competencies/qualities that the nominating committee evaluates when running for national office are: Communication, Team Player, Areas of Knowledge, Personal Organization, Character, Passion for Success, Influence, and Critical Thinking. Candidates must also have their American FFA Degree and be at least one year post high school graduation.

What are some of the steps you took as an FFA member that led you to be elected to a National Office?

Take advantage of every single opportunity you have to attend events and meet other FFA members! Doing this not only opened my eyes to the opportunities available in FFA, but the friends I made helped push me to become my best and to continuously look for ways to serve others. In the end, though, just staying true to myself and being genuine in all things helped me get to where I am today.

What advice would you give to an FFA member at the high school level to ensure their leadership success?

The best advice I would have is to not only attend events, but be engaged and put in 100%. Don't be afraid to sit with people from a completely different chapter or go to activities that none of your friends are attending. I met some of my best friends this way and pushing myself outside of my comfort zone proved to be some of the best growing experiences!

What is the most important thing you will be taking from your career as a member/officer of the FFA?

Someone once said "If you dreams don't scare you, they aren't big enough." As an FFA member, I feel like I am challenged to live out this quote every day. Whether it is setting big goals for an SAE or dreaming of winning a CDE contest, in FFA we are constantly challenged to push ourselves. While I may not have been able to achieve many of my dreams and goals in FFA, the journey and growth in chasing those dreams proved to be most valuable. The passion and drive that gave me will be beneficial no matter what I do in life.

Laying Down the Law

On Thursday, March 5, the Athens FFA showed off their legislative spirit by participating in Ag Legislative Day.

While every other student was spending their day computing vectors and matrixes of a plane, members of the FFA were expressing an interest in state politics at the Illinois state capitol building in downtown Springfield.

Members who took part in this annual event were first taken to the office of their state representative, Tim Butler, where they were able to visit with him and ask him questions. Tim spoke with members and expressed his excitement about being their new

representative.

They were then able to hear a brief message on why they were there as well as be briefed on the proposed state agricultural education funding cuts by state officers as well as the Illinois Director of Agriculture, Phil Nelson.

Their purpose was to shine a positive image on the organization through their partaking in the event. One way they accomplished this feat was by delivering commodity baskets and lunches to their secretaries.

Last on the agenda was the attending of a house session. There special recognition was given to the FFA members in attendance and their purpose. Attendees were able to view lawmakers in action



as well as see US Senator Dick Durbin who was a visitor on the floor.

By going on the trip, our chapter was better educated on what really goes on with our government as well as inform those around us on the leadership FFA members display and value. Thank you to all those for that representation as well as Mr. Brown and Mr. Evans for giving their time to chaperone this event.



Members pose with governor Bruce Rauner

No Funds for Ag Ed

This year's state budget plan involves zeroing out the Ag Ed Line Item which provides funding for school agriculture programs.

The 1.8 million dollars allotted by the state of Illinois is planned to stop, a decision that will affect 600,000 teachers and students at the elementary, high school, and college levels statewide. This is part of the governor's proposed budget plan for 2015.

What can we do to change legislation? Contact your lawmakers! Students in enrolled in an Athens agricultural class took part in writing letters to the capitol, but we can't stop there. Get you parents and fellow non-FFA classmates on board to preserve this vital asset to agricultural education.

Career Success >>>

Who Says Ag's a Man's World?

Agriculture is traditionally a male-dominated field. With just 15% of farm operations being run by females, its time to step up recruitment and get women interested in one of the most promising career fields out there. That's where the WCFA Conference comes in.

On Friday, March 6, hundreds of the young women in FFA crowded together to break the stereotypes of agriculture and learn how they can be a part.

Members were able to attend conferences led by professional speakers that were tailored to their desired career field. Areas like plant science and food service were covered.

This was beneficial in reaching out to the girls and encouraging the smart choice of an agricultural career. Attendees had a positive experience worth repeating next year.



Putting the “Active” Into “Active Member”

Athens FFA members and their guests participated in the annual chapter ski trip on March 1-2 where they were able to show off their sporting spirit and take part in the art of skiing.



You look around Central Illinois and see—flat land. Not the kind of place where one might be given the chance to tear up the slopes on skis. That's why the Athens FFA bussed members up to Dubuque, Iowa, to give them this opportunity to expand their athletic abilities.

Day one of this yearly chapter trip took place at the indoor water park in the hotel complex students spent the night at. There members were able to hang out, try the waterslides, and get drenched from head to toe in water. Members then returned to their rooms and prepared for a day of winter recreation.

The next morning, members got back on the charter bus to head to Sundown Mountain Resort where they learn the art of skiing, snowboarding, or falling. The last one was proof that mistakes are proof of trying, but didn't put a damper on spirits. Members had a blast

on the slopes, despite their level of skill, during lessons or straight up free styling it on snowboarding or skiing.

This is a can't miss trip. Those who considered going this year but didn't should definitely sign up next year. For those who did go, invite guests! This is a great chance to show the school how awesome our organization can be. Also, thank you to those who gave their time to chaperone this event.



Personal Growth >>>

Cemetery Clean-Up

Athens members donned on their work boots and gloves for a rather unusual task—cleaning out the West Cemetery. Workers raked and shoveled away sawdust that had been left over from a recent tree-cutting project at the site..

While it may seem like a weird way for our chapter to get involved in the community, it goes only to show that we are prepared to answer any call to help even when it preys on centuries old superstitions. Thank you to all who helped out on this event.



Knowing Your Porterhouse from Your T-bone

Meats CDE and the Athens FFA are no strangers. Having a chapter record of placing second in national competition, identifying and grading cuts means big news for Athens members.

Pin bone, mock tender, and ham shank smoked were just some of the meat cuts Athens FFA members had to memorize for the Section 14 Meats CDE. As well as identifying cuts of meat, members also had to determine the yield and quality grades of meat carcasses and rank an array of cuts and carcasses.

How do you tell your porterhouse from your T-bone? By looking to see if it lacks a tenderloin or not. Characteristics like these were needed to identify the many pork and beef cuts set out by the Jones Meat Locker in Jacksonville for members to identify. Attendees would have to decipher roasts from steaks and shell bone from flat bone by noticing slight differences between them.

Also involved was the yield and quality grading of meats. In order to find the yield grade, members had to look at rib eye area and fat thickness in relativity to the animal. The less fat and the bigger the REA the better. Quality grade is the amount of marbling the meat has, the more the better.

Lastly, those competing were presented with a class of anything from pork carcasses to shoulder roasts. They then ranked cuts based on how well they were performed and how good of a quality the meat was.

Athens as a whole placed 3rd overall. Individual winners at the section level were Justin Myers in 4th, Danielle Cornwell in 7th, and Jacqueline Stuebs in 9th. A big thanks goes to Mr. Brown for coordinating this CDE.



On the Record

Excelling in an SAE Area

Athens had four members advance from Section 14 proficiency awards onto District III proficiency awards. There they would go against members from four other sections for the chance to advance to State.

Anyone who knows FFA can tell you the amount of work it takes to run a successful SAE project worthy of recognition. This is especially prevalent to the four members who made it past Section and on to District record book judging.

Students went against up to four other members in their category and were judged based on how good of a record book they kept and how well they panned out in their interview. The judges consisted of a panel of volunteers who had basic knowledge on the topic and were able to ask constructive questions for the member during the interview to show their general knowledge of their area.

Athens had two members advance to State, two seconds, and one star. First in the area of Diversified Crop Production Placement and District III Star in Ag Placement was Tod Carter. Danielle Cornwell placed first in the area of Agricultural Energy Systems. Coming second in the area of Diversified Crop Production Entrepreneurship was Nathan Mayfield. Competing in the area of Agricultural Communications was Justin Myers who placed second in the category.



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