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SC FFA Leadership Center
Megan Stevens - Program Director, North Myrtle Beach

From Our SCAAE President

A message from SCAAE President, Ben Gibson

As many of you look toward your future and what career path you would like to take, I hope that those of you interested in education or the betterment of our youth will give a serious look at teaching agriculture. In a time where agriculture is something that happens in a place far away, and food comes from a grocery store or science lab, it is imperative that we continue to educate the students of today and tomorrow about the truths in agriculture and value it brings to our world. As an FFA member now, you are part of that process already and there is truly no better teaching opportunity than to be Tagged to Teach Ag!

In this issue of the Ag Future magazine, you will find a poster insert that will provide you with clear pathways in how you can become an Agriculture Teacher. Please take time to examine these pathways and follow them to a great career. You will also see the contact information on how you can contact the Clemson University Agricultural Education Program. Please feel free to reach out to them so that they can guide you in your journey.

We need you!! Please speak with your FFA Advisor and see what you need to do to become an agriculture educator and play a role in guiding our future toward a positive agricultural tomorrow!

Stay Connected

www.SCAgEd.org

Inside this issue

Legislator Appreciation Day 3
SC Farmer and Agribusiness Association 4
FFA Week Festivities 6
FFA State Convention 7
Clemson offers Ag Ed certificate 8
Chapter Highlights/Happenings 10-11
Miss FFA / Mr. FFA 13

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While the annual FFA Legislator Appreciation Day Ceremony was virtual this year, FFA Chapters from around the state were still able to meet with legislative representatives and hear a message of support from Governor McMaster, Dr. Molly Spearman, Superintendent of Education, Senator Wes Climer, and Representative David R. Hiott.

The ceremony’s link was released on February 24 on the South Carolina Agriculture Education website, www.scaged.org. The ceremony began with a welcome from State FFA President, Gracie Helms, followed by the remaining State FFA Officers introducing the prerecorded videos from State Legislators.

South Carolina Governor, Henry McMaster, began by welcoming the agriculture education students to the ceremony. He then discussed the importance and strength of agriculture in South Carolina. Governor McMaster read and signed the Governor’s Proclamation proclaiming February 20-27, 2021 as FFA Week.

The Proclamation stated that FFA members set a positive example for their peers through leadership skills, work ethic, and excellence in academics, patriotism, and community service. FFA members are recognized for their success in promoting agricultural education, natural resources conservation, and healthy living at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Molly Spearman, State Superintendent of Education, applauded the FFA organization for their hard work and concern for the community’s welfare. She encouraged FFA members to consider offering their time and dedication to public service. Superintendent Spearman also stated that she is a firm believer in Career and Technical Education and how students learn citizenship and leadership in classes such as Agricultural Education.

Hugh Weathers, Commissioner of Agriculture, said he is proud of FFA for sending a positive message of agriculture’s future. The FFA promotes the positive skill sets necessary for a successful career. Commissioner Weathers speaks highly of the future of agriculture in South Carolina as a result of the SC FFA membership.

Senator Wes Climer, Chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, provided a welcome on behalf of the Senate and is looking forward to working with South Carolina FFA members in the future.

State Representative David R. Hiott, of Pickens County, Chairman of the House Agriculture, Natural Resources & Environmental Affairs Committee, provided remarks to the FFA members and presented a Resolution of Recognition and Commendation to the State FFA Officers on behalf of all the members of the SC General Assembly.

While FFA members around the state could not physically attend the ceremony at the State House, many chapters reached out to their Legislators by holding a virtual meeting with them. Chapter officers were able to interact with their legislators by asking them questions, discuss their concerns related to school openings, and Covid and thank them for their support of agriculture education during this difficult time.

The week of George Washington’s birthday was designated as National FFA Week in 1947 at a National FFA Board of Directors meeting. FFA Week always runs from Saturday to Saturday and encompasses Washington’s Birthday.

The FFA positively influences the young people of America by developing character and leadership skills and preparing members for successful careers. FFA members are the leaders of tomorrow. Through agricultural education and hands-on learning, FFA members are preparing for more than 300 career opportunities in the food, fiber, and natural resources industries of agriculture. With more than 760,000 members, the organization has a history of service and a legacy of leadership.
For over a year, COVID-19 has affected all of us in one way or another. Many of us have missed time with family and friends, had to learn how to conduct meetings and business virtually, have dealt with postponements and cancellations of events, and maybe have dealt with the effects from the virus itself. One thing that has been directly affected by the pandemic is the SC Farmer and Agribusiness Association. We have seen the postponement of the 2020 Summer Tour, the cancellation of the Annual State Convention, and many chapters were put on pause until our communities improved. The South Carolina Farmer and Agribusiness Association will be excited to see a return to normal and attending in-person events with its many members across the state.

Farmer and Agribusiness Chapters across the state have found creative ways to continue to offer educational opportunities to its members. While a select few chapters have continued to have the opportunity to meet as normal during the pandemic, some chapters have just recently been able to gather together again, while others are still unable to meet in-person. Working with NYFEA, we were able to secure access to educational videos and farm tours from the NYFEA National Institute that our local chapters have been able to utilize and share with their members to continue offering valued educational topics either in-person or virtually. The NYFEA also provided access to its Agriculture Promise conference with educational topics and legislative updates that have been shared across the state with many of our members. Many chapters have also conducted service projects in outside areas in the community, learning new methods and providing expertise while strengthening the community. While our chapters have been faced with a challenge, it has been exciting to see how many chapters have met this challenge and diversified the delivery of Adult Education.

The South Carolina Farmer and Agribusiness Association is excited to return to in-person events. This will begin with our Annual Summer Tour, returning in July to Orangeburg County. The Orangeburg County Young Farmers have worked extremely hard to prepare for your visit and have secured some exciting tour stops for our members to visit and from which to learn. During the Friday night meal of the Summer Tour, we will recognize our Contest and Award winners from this past year. We are excited and hopeful about the opportunity to return to a sense of normalcy. We hope that you will join us and enjoy the fellowship, education, and celebrate our Contest and Award winners.

Virtual NYFEA Institute Opens New Opportunities to Reach Members

Due to COVID-19 and the restrictions associated with it, the 2020 NYFEA Institute had a different look this year. Instead of the traditional in-person Institute where members from across the nation come together to participate in workshops, collaboration and farm tours in the host city, this year members gathered virtually for three consecutive days of on-line learning and touring. The program engaged individuals from farms and agribusinesses representing a cross section of the United States. Combined registration for the three nights was more than 220 people. When added to the number of agribusiness, agriscience, FFA, 4-H and Young Farmer chapters that plan to show the footage, NYFEA is excited to announce that over 500 people are projected to have viewed and participated in the Virtual Institute.

The excitement of the NYFEA Association to have the capability of reaching so many people through this format and the knowledge gained from hosting the Virtual Institute has led to increased offerings and additional programming in the months ahead. In March, the traditional Agriculture’s Promise was a virtual experience offered to the members. Opportunities for individual and direct educational programming are being considered. NYFEA is currently reviewing topics that will be valuable for the individual agricultural businesses and for farmers. The idea is to have these available at a time that will be convenient and promote personal engagement. The association is also beginning a program of study to determine the interest in virtual programming for organizational use. Local agricultural organizations, college groups, and youth groups are target audiences.

Thank you to those of you that have joined the virtual offerings and for your engagement in the sessions. South Carolina Farmer and Agribusiness Association was very well represented and our Chapter Leaders continue to use these educational opportunities with members across the state. To share your thoughts and ideas on future educational offerings through the NYFEA, feel free to contact NYFEA at nyfea-main@nyfea.org.
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#howetomakehistory
Highlighting FFA Week Festivities

By Jillian Lash

Each year, FFA chapters around the country celebrate National FFA Week. It is a time to share what FFA is and the impact it has on members every day. Starting in 1948, the National FFA Board of Directors designated a weeklong tradition to recognize George Washington’s example and legacy as a leader and farmer. For the past 73 years, FFA members across the country have taken part in agricultural, leadership and service-based activities during National FFA Week. While some events were held virtually and others were in-person, the message was still the same: spread the word of the importance and traditions of the FFA.

The Central FFA chapter worked at the Helping Hands Outreach Center Food Bank on Feb. 22. While at the foodbank, members unloaded donated food, stocked shelves by expiration date, labeled food and handed out food to people who came to the foodbank. They also distributed jackets to people who needed one. The FFA also hosted a food drive during the weeks before volunteering at the food bank and delivered those donated foods when they went.

Many FFA Chapters participate in the week-long festivities by having a theme for each day of the week. The Blue Ridge FFA Chapter hosted a Wearable Wednesday. The FFA members proudly wore their FFA jackets to school. Swansea FFA Chapter’s theme of the day was “American Agriculture” Day.

In celebration of National FFA Week, the Seneca FFA Chapter decided to honor some of the community’s essential workers. In the span of a little over a day, the students wrote over 800 thank you notes. Each student wrote an individualized card to the staff in 57 departments so every single doctor, nurse, and staff member at Prisma Health - Oconee Memorial Hospital would receive a special note of gratitude. The Seneca FFA Chapter wanted to recognize the hospital staff who continue to work hard every day during these difficult times by reminding them that they are loved and appreciated.

SC FFA Members: We Are Here With You!

By Lee Padgett, SC FFA Vice President

This year can be described as anything but normal. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a massive effect on the FFA and how we made connections with the membership. There are countless events that the state officers missed out on this year, from holding in-person workshops, Greenhand camp, and many more. While things haven’t gone the way most had hoped, our officers did their best to make the most of circumstances by holding numerous virtual workshops for various audiences in the FFA, such as a unique virtual COW workshop, as well as an exciting Greenhand Conference. Our officers will also be using their virtual experiences to provide a virtual convention for the members of SCFFA. While this isn’t ideal, it lets us reach more members than we ever have before in South Carolina and allows us to have a little bit of fun continuing the tradition of the South Carolina FFA Conventions.

Our SCFFA Officer team wants to let you know that we understand the hardships you all have faced, and although these times may be difficult, we can come together as an organization and continue to lead and serve as examples. True leaders are never made in easy times, and now is our time to shine, SCFFA. Our officers are always available to talk and are working hard through these times to provide the best experience they can. We hope to see you all someday and cannot wait to see what you will achieve! Stay positive and hopeful South Carolina FFA!
94th South Carolina FFA Convention: Influence to Impact

By Jillian Lash

The 2021 State FFA Convention will be an exciting time for FFA members, advisors and agriculturalists from around the state. This year’s virtual convention will recognize FFA member’s outstanding achievements, present the state officers retiring addresses and offer student workshops. The state officers are excited about this opportunity to reach many FFA members and guests across the state. Many of which would not be a part of the State Convention in a typical year.

Interactive student workshops will be available to all agriculture students to participate in, including Clemson University’s College of Agriculture, Forestry & Life Sciences presenting a seminar on what students can do to prepare for life after high school and getting into college. Farm Bureau will help students explore how to be an advocate for agriculture in their home and community.

The SC FFA is excited to welcome David Lopez, National FFA Western Region Vice President from California, to the State Convention. David will present an interactive workshop for members and provide words of wisdom and encouragement as the guest speaker during the Third General Session.

Highlighting the outstanding accomplishments of SC FFA members:

- June 7 – The convention will kick off with student workshops followed by the First General Session. The First Session will begin with a welcome from the National FFA Advisor, James Woodard, recognize scholarship winners, and National Chapter award recognition. Region 4 Vice President Tori Gillis’ retiring address will be released shortly after the First General Session.
- June 8 – At 8 a.m., the retiring addresses of Region 4 Vice President, Lee Padgett and Region 1 Vice President , Adisyn Lyles, followed by the National FFA Officer workshop. At 10 a.m., the Second General Session will introduce the State Officer Candidates, the TAGGED presentation, and the State FFA Degree Ceremony.
- June 9 – Region 1 Vice President, Ashlyn Patterson, will present her retiring address at 8 a.m., followed by an additional workshop. At 10 a.m., the Third General Session will begin, including the FFA Stars Over South Carolina, recognizing the Honorary State FFA Degree recipients and American Degree candidates.
- June 10 – The final day of the State FFA Convention will start with State Secretary Gunnar Black and State President Gracie Helms’ retiring addresses. The Fourth and final General Session includes the individual awards announcements, proficiency winners and the top 3 CDE teams. The session will conclude with the exciting announcement of 2021-2022 state officers.

Invitation to the State Convention

By Gracie Helms, SC FFA State President

South Carolina FFA members, advisors and supporters, on behalf of the state officer team, we would like to thank you all for your continued support, understanding and outpouring of love during this unique year. South Carolina has faced some trying times this past year, but things are only looking up with the announcement of our 94th annual State Convention. This virtual state convention will be more advanced and interactive than ever before. We will be featuring real-time updates on our social media pages of the workshops, awards and speakers as they are being presented for the amazing FFA family that may not be able to attend the live sessions as they are debuting.

We are thrilled to announce that our convention theme this year is Influence to Impact. This year’s convention theme holds a message and meaning that the FFA touches can relate to every life. Every person is influenced by something negative or positive, but how we impact others from the influence we are given is what matters. The officer team has dearly missed seeing our members, advisors and supporters in person, but our impact will not be held back by this pandemic, and this state convention will be the best one yet.

We look forward to the success of the upcoming convention. We are patiently (or better yet impatiently and overly excitedly) waiting to see the photos and videos of you in your beautiful blue corduroy jackets and chapter FFA shirts all over social media. Remember to follow us on Instagram and Facebook at @SCFFAOFFICERS for daily posts and interactive events and giveaways. Much love from your state officer team, and we hope to “see” you all at the convention.
Agricultural Education teachers are in high demand, and Clemson University adds a new post baccalaureate certificate program that can help fill this need. Keomba McNeely is the first Clemson student to earn the add-on certificate in agricultural education and believes engaging students in the learning process is important.

The program is an add-on certificate in Agricultural Education that compliments most bachelor degree programs offered in the Clemson College of Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences. This certificate requires an additional 31 credits of coursework plus a full spring semester (12 credits) of student teaching.

Catherine DiBenedetto, an assistant professor and academic program coordinator in the Clemson Agricultural Sciences Department, said students can add this certificate program to their degree program and be recommended for a teaching certificate to teach school-based agricultural education at the secondary level.

“Agicultural education is so important,” DiBenedetto said. “Through agricultural education, teachers can help students understand where their food comes from, as well as how their carbon footprints affect the environment. The curricula taught in school-based agricultural education programs builds important connections to science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) concepts, technical knowledge skills, leadership and employability skills and practical experiences that are vital to preparing secondary students for both college and careers.”

In addition to current students, industry professionals who have bachelor’s degrees in areas related to agriculture, food and natural resources (AFNR) and have work experience related to AFNR areas can return to Clemson, earn a certificate and change their career to teach agriculture.

Keomba McNeely graduated from Clemson in 2016 with a bachelor’s degree in wildlife and fisheries biology. She participated in the certificate program when she return to earn a master’s degree. McNeely, who is from Goose Creek, is the first student to earn the add-on certificate.

“Participating in this program has taught me how to involve students in the learning process so that they will gain a better understanding of what is being taught and be successful,” McNeely said. “Being successful will boost their confidence. They will enjoy learning and become eager to learn more.”

McNeely plans to use project-based learning related to agriculture as part of her lesson plans when she starts teaching science at NEXT School Eagle Ridge in Salem this fall.

“I also will encourage students to become involved in the 4-H club and the FFA organization,” she said. “These experiences provide excellent learning opportunities for students outside the classroom. By participating in these activities, students can learn about agriculture, as well as what they can do to help make their communities thrive.”

Mariah Swygert is a senior agricultural education major from Leesville who helped develop promotional
materials for the program. Working to develop these materials has given her a better understanding of the program and the need for agriculture education. “Through the process of developing these documents with Ms. Katie Black and Dr. DiBenedetto, I gained a better understanding of the program and its benefit to non-Ag Ed majors to dive deeper in to their choice course of study while also having an opportunity to become a certified agriculture teacher,” Swygert said. “There is a huge demand for agriculture teachers and this certificate program is a great step forward in helping supply the need for these teachers.”

Swygert believes agriculture classes are important because, “The more agriculture classes are taught the number of students who receive an agricultural education increases which, then, increases students’ agriculture literacy and understanding, and hopefully appreciation for everyone involved in the agriculture industry.

“In this program, people have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the next generation of leaders. What else is greater than showing a young person the vastness of the world they live in and the depths of their own inner potential?”

According to the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE), the demand for agricultural education teachers continues to grow because of program growth, expansion and retirements. School districts value the agricultural education model of rigorous STEM-based classroom and laboratory instruction, experiential learning and leadership development. Due to the demand for agricultural education teachers and the comparatively low supply of graduates, school districts are hiring a high number of alternatively certified and non-licensed teachers to fill open positions and avoid program closures.

South Carolina is located in the NAAE Region 5. NAAE statistics show the average starting annual salary in 2019 for agricultural education teachers in this region was $39,309 and $42,028 nationwide. The retention rate of agriculture teachers in South Carolina is historically high at nearly 97%.

“As the demand for high quality and diverse agriculture teachers grows, it is critical now more than ever we invest in and celebrate current and future agriculture teachers who will cultivate the next generation of leaders, problem solvers, entrepreneurs and agriculturalists,” said Ellen Thompson, National Teach Ag Campaign Project Director.

GET TAGGED: Looking for the Next Generation of Agricultural Educators

By Jason Gore

All around the country, schools and career centers are looking for agricultural educators and FFA advisors. In 2020 alone, there were over 800 positions for teachers nationwide and not enough individuals to fill them all leading to the closure of dozens of programs. The National Teach Ag Campaign was created to identify the next generation of agricultural educators and prepare them for an exciting career in agricultural education.

If you’re interested in shaping the next generation of agriculturalists and leaders, providing students dynamic, hands-on learning opportunities, and sharing your passion for agriculture, a career in agricultural education may be exactly what you’re looking for. Agricultural educators have the opportunity to create and deliver innovative, hands-on lessons in cutting-edge technologies like cloning, biofuels, drone technology, and more; provide opportunities to students to develop career and leadership skills; and even travel across the state, nation, and potentially the world through programs with organizations like the National FFA Organization and the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE). However, classroom instruction is not the only career available to agricultural education majors. Individuals with degrees in agricultural education have gone on to be cooperative extension professionals, public relations professionals with national and international agribusiness firms, and public policy experts across all levels of government.

If you’re ready to take the next steps towards an exciting career in agricultural education, or if you just want a little more information, be sure to check out the Teach Ag Campaign webpage at: www.naae.org/teachag and follow @Teach_Ag on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

The National Teach Ag Campaign is a project of the National Council for Agricultural Education, led by the National Association of Agricultural Educators. Funding for the National Teach Ag Campaign is provided by the CHS Foundation, Corteva Agriscience™, Growth Energy, and BASF as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.
Agriculture will always be considered a “hands on” program, but especially in the age of COVID-19, it has been a “hands on the computer” program. Keeping students abreast of technology while continuing to teach traditional agricultural practices is something that agriculture programs across the country are having to do to keep up with the quickly changing face of today’s industry. The population of virtual students is rising even though the typical agriculture student still prefers the classroom training. The Buford agriculture teachers, Justin Reynolds and Gayle Posipanko, are incorporating technology into the program for students to learn how to become more efficient in farming.

An aeroponic system was purchased a few years ago, and the students learned to grow leafy crops in the shop. Since then, one of the two agriculture shops has become an indoor garden. An NFT lettuce system and a Dutch Bucket tomato system was added to the shop to grow produce during the school year. Agriculture science students are challenged to develop their own miniature version that can be used at home. With the public outcry of “less pesticides,” Buford students easily see how these systems could replace their traditional gardens. Caleb Payne, a senior and horticulture completer states, “Hydroponics saves an incredible amount of space compared to traditional soil gardening.”

To keep the training with their current needs, the Buford Agriculture department also has a traditional garden. Students learn the differences between warm season and cool season crops, the benefits of crop rotation, and how to successfully plant and harvest produce. Through the traditional garden students also have more opportunity to experiment with organic vs. inorganic fertilizers and pesticides. While students can see the future of vertical and indoor farming, the majority of them will tell you their preference is to be outdoors!

The Buford Agricultural department designed and recently created an outdoor classroom for students to reconnect to the environment while still maintaining a classroom structure. This has become a favorite learning environment for agriculture students with requests from other teachers for writing and drawing. Benches were constructed along with a podium for classroom instruction. Future plans for this area include the addition of sensory plants, as well as the addition of a vineyard and orchard. The incorporation of a polyethylene drip irrigation system will teach the students about sustainability within farming practices. Paired with a Smart Irrigation system, the teachers can show students how to make it become completely automated.

The typical agricultural student is quick to announce the dislike of technology. However, as they learn more about agriculture at Buford, the technology is becoming more important. Today’s students need to be comfortable with computers, drones and robots to become the best agriculturalist of tomorrow. The past has to be taught to appreciate where we are today. Abe Hilliard, an Agriculture Science student says, “We should always know how to work something new, but if we need to go back to the old way, we should know how to.” The animals and plants of tomorrow will still need the same food, water and sunlight as they always have but Buford students will hopefully know the most efficient ways to accomplish that.
Blue Ridge High School Ag Student Meets SC Governor

By Jessie Comer

Wyatt Spearman, Blue Ridge High School senior and FFA chaplain, took a drive to Columbia and met the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina. Wyatt decided weeks prior to take a chance and email Governor Henry McMaster, Lt. Governor Pamela Evette and Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers for an appointment to meet and discuss some important topics involving South Carolina, Blue Ridge High School and Wyatt’s future. Wyatt stated, “The worst they could tell me was no.”

After sending the email to request a meeting, Wyatt received a reply saying the Governor and Lieutenant Governor were more than willing to have Wyatt into their office for a discussion. Wyatt stated that as soon as he arrived at the State House in Columbia, everyone knew his name and knew who he was there to speak with. Wyatt was taken to the Governor’s office where he, Gov. McMaster and Lt. Gov. Evette shared some valuable time of fellowship. Evette discussed her sponsored event, Earth Day Litter Pickup. Wyatt learned that litter is detrimental to the environment, wildlife, and our economy. Lt. Governor Evette sponsors a statewide litter cleanup event on Earth Day. Wyatt was interested in setting up and preparing a cleanup day for Blue Ridge High School in support of the Lt. Governor’s cleanup mission.

Wyatt then had an opportunity to engage in a meaningful discussion with McMaster. McMaster welcomed Wyatt in the Governor’s office and told him to look around at the different pictures and accomplishments hanging on the walls. McMaster leaves those pieces of memorabilia up to remember where he came from and to look forward to what he is currently pursuing or will pursue in the future. He challenged Wyatt to set goals for the future, remember where he came from, and work hard for what he wants to achieve in life. Wyatt is very grateful for the opportunity to meet and hear from the Lieutenant Governor and Governor of South Carolina. Wyatt wants to extend his greatest appreciation to the leaders of South Carolina who welcomed him in and took time out of their busy schedules to share their knowledge and wisdom with him.

South Carolina agricultural education serves more than 12,000 students across the state. Students receive instruction in one of five different pathways within the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources career cluster. The South Carolina FFA Association is comprised of over 7,000 members across the state. The mission of the SC FFA Association is to develop premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.

Agriculture Education Has Become Popular At The Lowcountry Leadership Center

By Katie Bell, Agriculture Teacher Lowcountry Leadership Center

Walking through the doors at Lowcountry Leadership Charter School, you will experience the sights and sounds of a K-12 learning environment — students learning in the classroom and beyond.

Six years ago, Katie Bell joined the staff of this new school and began to gauge the interest of the students and community to incorporate agriculture education. With lots of hard work, fundraising, sponsorships and grants, the Ag Ed program at LLCS has become the most popular course pathway for its high school students.

In that short time, students have built a two-acre sustainable school farm on campus that incorporates not just one area of agriculture but many, including animals, vegetable production, annual and perennial greenhouse growing, cut flower production, small and large equipment management, and aeroponics. The variety of areas from which to learn has developed strong student leadership through the FFA chapter, sparking ideas for SAE projects, National FFA grant winners, post-secondary careers and college majors, and much more.

Unique to LLCS, the Ag program is woven into the learning throughout other classes at the school from kindergarten through high school. Younger students visit the farm for tours, learning from the high school leaders about plants and animals. Middle school students have opportunities to come work alongside older students on farm projects such as crop rotation and harvesting. This unique opportunity to shape learners about the role agriculture plays in their daily lives has had a huge impact on student retention and teacher participation in agriculture-based curriculum in all subject areas.
Growing Minds for a Growing Industry

Spartanburg Community College provides students with the knowledge and skills required for a successful career in the horticulture industry. Thanks to a widely respected campus arboretum with many gardens and greenhouse production facilities, SCC students gain hands-on experience with plant production, landscaping, nursery operations, greenhouse management and more. Students also attend conferences and field trips for diverse horticulture experiences and many complete internships with various companies such as Walt Disney World, The Greenery and the Biltmore House.

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2021 Miss FFA Crowned

By Hayley Belton, Director of Public Relations and Marketing, SC Governor’s School for Agriculture

On March 5, the SC Governor’s School for Agriculture at John de la Howe and AgSouth Farm Credit presented the 2021 Miss FFA Scholarship Pageant at the Abbeville Opera House. The winner of the Miss FFA Scholarship Pageant received a $500 scholarship from AgSouth Farm Credit, presented by Liza Wilson. Liza grew up on a row crop farm in the small town of Lowrys in Chester County. While earning her degree in Agribusiness from Clemson University, she completed a summer internship with AgSouth in Rock Hill. After graduation in May of 2020, Liza began working as a Loan Officer in the Batesburg-Leesville branch. Thank you to Liza and AgSouth for providing this scholarship.

This year’s judges were Darla Steele, Lauren Taylor and Steve Meadows. Steele is a former agriculture teacher, FFA advisor and currently serves as the Central South Carolina and Georgia Territory Manager for BWI Companies. Taylor of Anderson is a past state officer with SC FFA and SC Young Farmer and Agribusiness Association, and is the owner of Chasing Letters Creative, a marketing consulting firm for small businesses and non-profit organizations. Meadows is the Clemson University Extension Beef Specialist.

The 2021 Miss FFA Winners were announced as follows: second runner-up, Kinlyn Hinson of the Kershaw FFA; first runner-up, Kaylen Ryan of the West-Oak FFA Chapter; and this year’s winner was Page Holcombe of the West-Oak Chapter. Congratulations to all 40 girls who participated in this year’s pageant.

Mr. FFA Crowns 2021 Winner: Ben Pardue

By Blake Berry, Advisor Pendleton FFA Chapter

On Feb. 26, the Pendleton FFA hosted the 10th annual Mr. FFA Scholarship Competition. Like so many events this year, Mr. FFA was held as “virtual experience,” uniting 30 outstanding young male FFA members from across SC to vie for the title of Mr. FFA. The theme this year reflected how our organization and members have dealt with the past year, “You Can’t Keep a Good Man Down.”

The Master of Ceremonies was none other than the 2020 Mr. FFA, Lee Padgett, Clemson University freshman and SC State FFA Vice President from Pelion. Judges included Dale Layfield and Kassie Seiler of Clemson University and Sydney Gambrell of Winthrop University. Contestants were ranked on their resumes and application questions, along with interview questions and an extemporaneous response to questions from the judging panel conducted live on Zoom.

Ben Pardue will serve as Mr. FFA for 2021. He will also receive a scholarship from the historic Pendleton Farmers Society for his outstanding leadership. Ben is a member of the Conway FFA Chapter, where he serves as chapter vice-president. His SAE involves raising poultry. Upon graduation Ben would like to pursue a degree in agricultural education.
Brodie had always loved the outdoors, plants — and FFA. When he came to Clemson he found that all his interests could come together in one even bigger passion — feeding the world.

At Clemson, Brodie conducted research on plant pathology with professors who shared his goals. He then applied that research to the campus’ Tiger Gardens where he also taught nutrition and sustainability. Brodie is now in graduate school, with plans to travel to third-world countries to help them solve their food crises.

It’s a big task. But with knowledge, enthusiasm and the support of his mentors, Brodie is up to the challenge.

Learn more about Brodie’s story at clemson.edu/moments.
There’s a place for YOUth in Farm Bureau

We’re helping young men and women just like you hone their skills, build relationships and become the ag leaders of tomorrow.

• Summer Youth Leadership events
• High School, Collegiate & YF&R Discussion Meets
• Youth Ambassador Scholarship Program
• Young Farmers & Ranchers (ages 18-35)
• Collegiate Farm Bureaus

Find out more at www.SCFB.org

2020 NAAE Virtual Convention
Contributed by Ashley Granata, Agriculture Teacher Pickens County Career Center

In a year full of firsts, the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) held its first-ever virtual convention in conjunction with the ACTE annual conference Nov. 30-Dec. 4, 2020. The convention is a highlight of the year for many agriculture teachers who attend, and this year was no exception.

Six hundred and seventy-four NAAE members from across the country participated in live or on-demand workshops, general and business sessions, as well as attended a virtual interactive expo hall. The NAAE convention provided meaningful and high-quality professional development and networking opportunities through Zoom events.

Fifty-three preservice educators, including Erica Wearing from Clemson University and alumna of the Seneca FFA Chapter, attended the NAAE convention in the Future Agriscience Teacher Symposium (FAST).

The Future Agriscience Teacher Symposium (FAST) is a professional development experience for preservice agricultural education majors that provides customized professional development, networking and mentoring with current and future agriculture teachers and stakeholders from across the country.

Dale Layfield, Associate Professor at Clemson University, was recognized as an ACTE national finalist for the Teacher Educator of the Year award. This award recognizes teacher educators who have demonstrated innovation in teacher education, leadership in improving career and technical education (CTE), and commitment to preparing teachers to deliver high-quality CTE programs.

The hard work of our South Carolina Agricultural Educations didn’t go unnoticed. SCAAE received the Professional Service Association award for the outstanding service provided to the continuous professional development and support opportunities provided.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 2021 NAAE Convention being held in New Orleans on Nov. 30- Dec. 4.

The FAST Symposium focuses on the following:
• Creating an inclusive classroom environment
• Inquiry-Based Learning
• Classroom Management
• Professional development
• Collegiality
• Student teaching and first-year preparation
• Job Interview success