

FFA Holds Midwinter Convention In Large Arena

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HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — For the first time, the Pennsylvania FFA held its mid-Winter Convention in the Large Arena of state Farm Show Complex Monday evening, to present the organization's earned degrees, honor supporters and to select the top four star members in the state.

Because of delays with beef cattle shows, the convention got off to a late start, but it did little to deter the apparent enthusiasm of the members who sat on metal folding chairs facing a stage constructed at the north end of the dirt floor arena.

With an amplified banging of the gavel, state FFA President Mandy Hilbert opened the convention with the traditional opening ceremony, with each of the state officers explaining their duties.

She then welcomed the public and explained the newness of the convention site.

"This is the first year to hold the convention here at the Farm Show Complex. This is an opportunity for us to inform the public about our organization, the FFA," she said.

She told the full arena that they would witness more than 300 active FFA members from across the state receive prestigious awards, including the Keystone, Star and State Star.

She also explained that the national FFA claims membership of more than 400,000 youth, including the District of Columbia and territories Guam, Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and that it is an agricultural and leadership-development organization.

She also talked about the state's membership in excess of 7,500 youth aged 14 to 21 and the diversity of the different chapters.

Also, she explained that it is no longer called Future Farmers of America, a error still commonly made by non-agricultural media.

One of the highlights of the mid-winter convention is to present achievement and honorary awards and degrees.

Prior to the convention, most of the recipients already know what they are to receive. However, the selection for the top four members in the state organization isn't revealed until the convention.

There are four categories for which a member can strive to achieve star status: in production; sales, service and mechanics; horticulture; and specialized.

The regional star winners were ushered out on stage by one of the FFA officers, where a spotlight focused on the member while the introduction was made.

There was also a large screen hung to the left and high above the stage so that the audience could watch as a slide presentation of the member accompanied the introduction.

When the regional star winners of the category were all introduced, an envelope was opened to reveal the winner's name, adding to the drama.

Western Region Star Chad Nichols, president of the Connaught Valley FFA Chapter, was named state production star. He is the son of David and Jean Nichols, and lives at home on his parents' Crawford County dairy farm. His projects are Brown Swiss dairy herd and raising sorghum. He started in FFA with 11 animals and now has 21 registered Brown Swiss.

Also up for the award were Eastern Region Star Kraig Sellers, son

of Kenneth and Karen Sellers, who have a dairy farm near Annville and milk about 70 Holsteins; North Central Star Catherine Pirrung, member of Headwaters FFA and daughter of Gerald and Constance Pirrung, who have a dairy farm; and South Central Star Colleen Kretzing, of the West Perry FFA, daughter of Perry and Adeliade Kretzing, who have a dairy farm in Loysville.

The Agriculture Sales, Service and Mechanics Star is Western Region Star John Evans, member of Linesville FFA Chapter and son of Mark and JoAnn Evans, from Crawford County.

John's enterprises include dairy herd, small engine repair, agricultural mechanics, landscaping and mowing. He learned basic tune-up skills working on push mowers for his grandfather who has a small-engine repair business.

For the past two years he worked on neighbors farms doing things such as greasing equipment, changing oil in tractors and doing maintenance.

Also up for the award was Doug Walker Northcentral Regional Star for Ag Sales, Service and Mechanics. A member of Cowanesque and the son of Doug Walker and Norman and Bonney Merchant.

The state Horticulture Star went to Linda DeAnn Hall, daughter of David and Nancy Hall. A member of the State College Little Lions FFA, she raises and sells poinsettias, spring bedding plants and vegetables and she markets and sell the plants at a profit. She uses the school greenhouse to grow a lot of her plants, since she doesn't have much space at home. She also has done research on light intensity and did a work experience project doing lawn care, maintenance and landscaping.

Also up for the honor was Western Region Star Julie Urcheck, member of the Derry Area FFA, and daughter of John and Jane Urcheck.

The Specialized Agriculture Star was won by Braden Elkin, also a Western Region Star, son of Benjamin and Kathryn Elkin. Vice president of the Marion Center FFA, Braden did a supervised project of raising winter squash, chinese vegetables and peppers. He used knowledge gained in class to fertilize the soil and control weeds to raise the crops which he marketed to local businesses.

Also up for the honor were Eastern Region Star Jesse Rabert, member of Kutztown FFA, and son of Lawrence and Shirley Rabert, of Kempton; and South Central Star Aaron Stephens, with Greenwood FFA, son of Dean and Gail Stephens, Liverpool.

In addition to the star farmers, there were 228 Keystone degree recipients (announced in the Jan. 9 issue of **Lancaster Farming**).

Other recognitions made during the convention included the Special Parent Recognition Award, given to parents who have had three or more children receive the FFA Keystone Degree. Those parents with three children received an Honorary Keystone Degree, while those parents with four or more Keystone Degree-winning children received a special parent award.

In the Eastern FFA Region, included were Nelson and Lois Harnish, of Willow Street with four Keystone children; Robert and Esther Groff, Lancaster, with three children; Abram and Mary Jane Hess, of Conestoga with four children winning; Daniel and Ethel Metzler of Pequea, with three;



Braden Elkin receives the state Star in Specialized Agriculture.

John and Jane Barley, of Conestoga, with three children receiving the Keystone; Harold and Audrey Dice, Fredericksburg, with three; Robert and Joan Rohrer, of Nottingham, three; and Ray and Barbara Bicksler, Richland, three.

In the South Central Region were Galen and Sonja McDonald, of Imler, with four children having received the Keystone; Glenn and Verda Fisher, St. Thomas, with four children; Carl and Mabel Lehman, Mechanicsburg, three; Charles Lobaugh and Anita Bown, Aspers, with three; Dale Sr. and Jean Myers, of Wellsville, three; and Earl and Tamie Campbell, Lykens, with three.

In the North Central Region, honored were Bryan and Donna Ianson, of Coudersport, with three children having received the degree.

And in the Western FFA Region, honored were Clyde and June Mostoller, of Garrett, with three children; and Herb and Carol Engle, also of Garrett, and also with three children having received the FFA Keystone Degree.

Eleven Honorary Keystone Degrees also were presented to individuals who have provided support and service to the FFA, having helped at least two FFA chapters for more than 10 years.

Recipients were state Rep. John Barley (also received special parent award); Gerald Phillips, loan officer for Keystone Farm Credit, Lancaster; Sonja Wasco, of Lititz, former ag instructor at Warwick High School, currently office manager at Grant Heilman Photography; Robert Badger, Quarryville, vice president of the Bank of Lancaster County; William Ringer, dairy and crop farmer, former Pennsylvania State Grange Master; Bernard Kunselman, of Marion Center; Michael Wilson, principal at New Oxford High School; Dr. Carl Allison, dairy farmer in Franklin County; Dr. Edwin Sponseller, chief school superintendent at Chambersburg Area School District; Calvin Sauder, farmer and truck driver in Cumberland County; and Dustin Peters, principal at Elizabethtown High School.

In other awards, Stephanie Garret, with Manor FFA, received the state Computers in Agriculture Award, which is given to the student who uses computers for agricultural purposes.

In the Building Our American Communities program, five chapters won the gold award at both the



Linda DeAnn receives the state Star in Horticulture.

state and national level for a number of projects.

The Spud Growers Chapter of Potter County did an aquaculture program at their high school, constructed a new park concession stand at the Coudersport Area Recreation Park, constructed water quality improvement on Mill Creek; a wildlife management project on 10 acres; and joined to assist 15 county officers in recovering and relocating after fire destroyed their office building. They also studied, grew and promoted flower awareness to more than 250 elementary school children.

The Greenwood FFA did two recycling projects; the Lenape FFA Chapter did a number of projects at Crooked Creek Horse Park; Grasslands FFA did a number of projects centered on the Chesapeake Bay and improving health through increasing recreational activities.

Cedar Crest FFA won a national silver award; Twin Valley and Headwaters FFA chapters won national bronze awards; while



John Evans receives the state Star in Agricultural Sales.



Chad Nichols receives the state Star in Agricultural Production.

Clearfield, Ephrata and Selingsgrove FFAs won silver state awards; and Berlin Brothersvalley, United, and Manheim FFAs received state bronze awards.

Franklin Farm-City Program Wins Again

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — State Secretary of Agriculture Boyd E. Wolff presented awards to three Farm-City Councils, the winner of a state poster contest, and a family partnership for conservation efforts Tuesday evening.

The Farm-City Councils were recognized for their yearlong efforts to promote rural and urban understanding. County activities were documented through scrapbooks and judged in December.

Dalton Paul, chairman of the Franklin County Farm-City Council, received a plaque for first place. His organization sponsored an agricultural exposition at the Chambersburg Mall, pumpkin caper, several farm tours, environmental festival, poster contest, mall exhibits, job exchange program and a speakers bureau.

Second place was awarded to the Mifflin County Farm-City Council, chaired by Donna Snook. Their activities included an agricultural products day, school programs, work exchanges and the printing of placemats for use by local restaurants. They were also instrumental in having farm-city themes included in a Halloween parade, fall frolic, and county-wide proclamation.

The Juniata Farm-City Council, chaired by Nancy Kauffman, picked up the third place award. They promoted conservation and environmental messages at the Juniata County Fair, agricultural banquet, farm family awards,

cooperator of the year and printed placements with county data.

Abe Singer of Dushore won the 1992 State Farm-City Poster Contest.

His poster was the blue ribbon entry at the Sullivan County Fair and made him eligible for the state contest. He received a \$100 check from Dyan Yingst, chairperson of the State Farm-City Council.

Adam Shaffer of New Stanton, representing the Harrold Fair, won second place in the poster contest earned a \$75 check. Third place and \$50 went to Katlyn Sleppy of Penn Run, Indiana County Fair. They were unable to get to the Farm Show for the awards.

Honorable mentions in the contest were given to Kendra Stoltfus representing the Kimberton Community Fair, and Amanda Wyman, Spartansburg Community Fair.

Gilbert Hutter of Westmoreland County received Pennsylvania's 1992 Good Earth Family Award from the National Endowment for Soil and Water Conservation. Hutter's sons Blaine and Dale accepted his award for outstanding achievement in conserving natural resources.

Hutter was a pioneer farmer in the use of no-till farming and nutrient management. His willingness to try new farming methods and his lifelong practice of soil and water conservation earned him the award.