

Eastern Region V.P. On To Chicago To Promote National FFA Week

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Lancaster Farming Staff
BLOOMVILLE, Ohio — Rick Perkins, national FFA eastern region vice president, never intended to be an FFA member.

Before he entered ninth grade, he tried to convince FFA advisor Tom Gerschutz, at the Sentinel Vocational School in Tiffin, Ohio, that FFA simply wasn't in Rick's plans to eventually study and practice law.

But Gerschutz and instructor Roland Zimmerman convinced Rick it was the right thing to do (after all, Rick's three brothers, Dan, 40, Mike, 38, and Bob, 36 were all FFA members). As a result, after five years of involvement in the organization, Rick said he has used his diverse experiences in FFA to help in his decision to eventually specialize in agriculture and law.

Rick has been busy in Washington, D.C. the past week along with several other national FFA officers to kick off National FFA Week, which begins today and lasts through next Saturday. The officers will be a part of two groups, according to Rick — one will stay in Washington and meet with representatives and senators on Capitol Hill. The other will conduct a media blitz in Chicago, meeting with Orien Samuelson on his syndicated TV show and to meet Chicago Board of Trade and Mercantile Exchange executives.

Rick, on the Chicago team, will also work to promote Sprayer Tune-Up Week by taking part in sprayer safety talks and demonstrations.

Rick said the officers will be on hand to talk about FFA and show how the organization "can make a difference in the lives of young people." In meeting with key agricultural industry leaders, Rick said there is a clear need for young people to "be communicators, to communicate with the public on issues related to consumers and different business issues.

"We need to be taking a more proactive role in the industry," he said.

Rick cited the recent FFA Japan tour which emphasized the need for communication in the global marketplace.

For his own career direction, Rick said FFA "changed my life." The organization provided Rick with direction and "common sense." FFA provides hands-on learning experiences, "the best way to learn things," said Rick.

As part of his FFA experiences in high school, Rick managed more than 100 head of registered Hampshire sheep. He also raised beef cattle. Raised on his family farm, Rick helps manage 200 acres of grains and hay, including soybeans, corn, wheat, oats, and alfalfa.

Rick is a freshman at Ohio State University, where he is majoring in ag economics with a minor in political science. He said someday he wants to work in the White House, and is watching closely what the policies of the Clinton administration will be toward agriculture.

FFA members in high schools throughout the country will promote FFA and ag education during FFA week, according to the National FFA Organization based in Alexandria, Va. This year's theme is "FFA — The Spirit of Leadership."

During the week and through the year, FFA chapters conduct activities which contribute to their school, community, and nation.

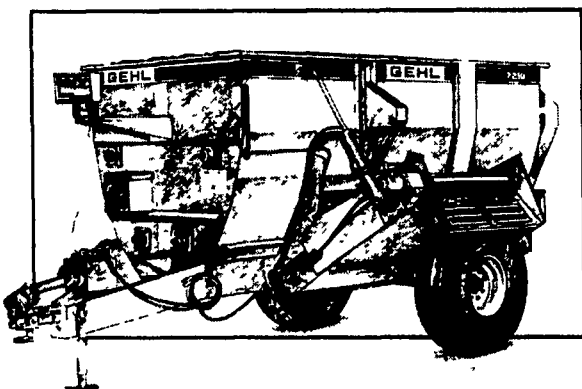
Travis Park, national FFA president from Franklin, Ind., said FFA Week is an opportunity for all members to catch the spirit of FFA and get involved. This year's theme challenges members to take advantage of leadership opportunities and to further their personal development.

"We are excited about the increasing numbers of members who are joining our ranks with a goal of assuming a leadership role in the agriculture of their community, state, and nation," said Park. "The organization achieved an increase in membership for the first time in a number of years to over 400,000 for 1992. We are also seeing significant changes in the way chapters and their advisers serve their communities."



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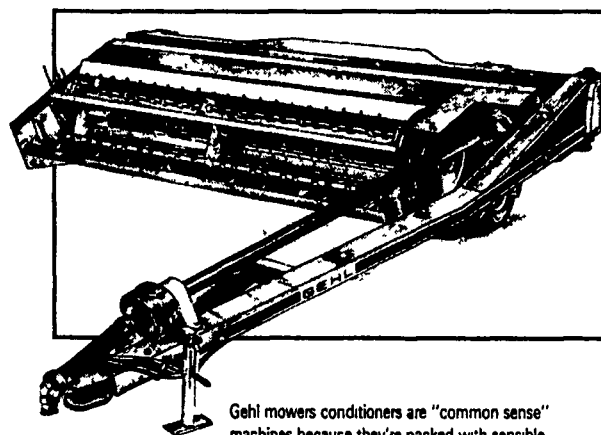
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