

# More Than 44,000 To Attend FFA Convention

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. — "FFA - Making the Connection" is the theme for the 71st National FFA Convention, symbolizing the agricultural education organization's mission to prepare students to create the link between themselves, their communities, the agricultural industry, and the nation.

More than 44,000 FFA members, advisers, supporters, and guests are expected to attend the convention Nov. 12-14 in the Municipal Auditorium and H. Roe Bartle Hall in Kansas City, Mo., only a few blocks from where the FFA was founded in 1928.

"FFA members are making the connection by merging traditions of the past with visions of the future," said Larry D. Case, national FFA adviser, "and there's no better place than the National FFA Convention to see the energy, motivation, and talent that will unite us with our ever-changing world."

"Students from across the country celebrate each other's successes, share their pride in American agriculture, and concentrate on leadership, personal growth, and career success. Watching those 44,000 students come together with such pride and energy is the best guarantee we have for the future of agriculture and of our nation."

The national convention, the culmination of a year's activities for FFA members, is an opportunity for recognition, business, elections and celebration. Delegates from each state will discuss topics affecting the national organization and elect a new team of national officers. Exceptional members and supporters will receive awards for their achievement and commitment to the FFA. Students will compete for national titles in several events, including

speaking and parliamentary procedure competitions.

Opportunities for personal growth and leadership development continue with presentations by educational and motivational speakers including Gerda Klein, author and historian, Baxter Black, cowboy poet; Les Brown, motivational speaker; Warren Faidley, storm chaser; and Robin Roberts, sport anchor.

Future education and career exploration also are key components of the convention. Students will have the opportunity to meet business and industry supporters of the FFA, represented through the 1998 National FFA Foundation Sponsors' Board chaired by Charles Fischer, vice president of Dow AgroSciences, North America and hundreds of exhibitors will provide information about education and career possibilities at the concurrent National FFA Alumni Convention and FFA National Agricultural Career Show.

The National FFA officers, a team of six student leaders, help plan the convention and other activities and represent the FFA on a national level. The officers kick off the convention the afternoon and evening of Nov. 11 with the opening Reflections sessions, a series of dramatic and motivational presentations that generate excitement and set the theme for the convention. The 1997-1998 National FFA Officers are Hillary Smith, national president from Perry, Georgia; Shannon Wilcox, national secretary from Kenton, Ohio; Mark Wilburn, central region vice president from Laddonia, Missouri; Dana A. Fisher, eastern region vice president from Maurertown, Virginia; Amber Miller, southern region vice president from Louisville, Alabama; and Cody Nash, western region

vice president from Inez, Texas. American Star Farmer, Star In Agribusiness Finalists

The National FFA Organization named four finalists for each of its two most prestigious awards, the American Star Farmer and the American Star in Agribusiness. These awards recognize students who have established profitable agricultural enterprises or agribusiness programs, demonstrated outstanding management skills, earned the American FFA Degree — the organization's highest level of accomplishment — and met other agricultural education and leadership requirements.

Star Farmer finalists are Shane Becker, 21, Worthington, Minn.; Lance Dobbins, 22, Thomas, Okla.; Dana Boehm, 21, Taylor, Texas; and Charles Pearce, 21, Walworth, Wis.

Star in Agribusiness finalists are Jere Stewart, 21, Nampa, Idaho; Andrew Tygrett, 20, Atalissa, Iowa; K.C. Gregg, 20, Spencer, S.D.; Troy Ambrose, 20, Amherst, Wis.

Each finalist will receive \$1,000 from the National FFA Foundation and will travel to Europe or Costa Rica for an international experience tour.

A panel of judges will interview the finalists and select one winner for each award at the 71st National FFA Convention Nov. 12-14 in Kansas City, Mo. Winners will receive an additional \$1,000.

#### Stewart Saw Composting Dairy Manure As Business Opportunity

"I saw the potential for an opportunity to start my own business," said Jere Stewart, Nampa, Idaho. "I was certain compost would make a profitable business for several reasons." The 21-year-old began his business after being approached about composting

their stockpile of manure on the family's dairy operation.

To recognize his accomplishments, the National FFA Organization named him a 1998 American Star in Agribusiness finalist, one of the agricultural education organization's highest honors. He will compete with three other finalists for the award at the 71st National FFA Convention Nov. 12-14 in Kansas City, Mo.

Stewart always knew he would eventually take over his family's farming operation. However, when he saw this opportunity to start his own business, he started setting goals. "My initial goal was to make enough money to get my investment back," Stewart said.

He progressed toward his goals faster than he expected. "I was certain my business would grow due to the greater education of today's environment concerns, but I never expected that in two and a half years I would have to tell someone that I was out of compost," Stewart said.

The former Kuna FFA Chapter member won the National Agriculture Processing Proficiency award in 1996, which earned him a trip to Costa Rica in 1997.

"One never realizes how much work goes into doing something until you've done it. I have to say that I am pleased with what has come about, and I'm excited and looking forward to what the future holds," he said.

Stewart's FFA advisers were Joe Blackstock and Shawn Dygert.

#### Marketing Skills Pay For Tygrett

"Many skills have had a major impact on my success," said Andrew Tygrett, Atalissa, Iowa. "However, the skill that has helped me achieve and set future goals are marketing skills." The 20-year-old established markets for his floral crops with three local florists within a 130-mile radius.

Tygrett's interest in floriculture began in 1989 when his father purchased flats of annuals, which he managed. In 1997 Tygrett bought 117 acres for expansion — the size and scope of which will allow him to meet the demands of a specialized market.

Finalist for the National FFA Organization's 1998 American Star in Agribusiness Award, one of the agricultural education organization's highest honors, he will compete with three other finalists for the award at the 71st National FFA Convention Nov.

12-14 in Kansas City, Mo.

"I have many advantages in my program — a local gladiolus grower lives close by and has served as my mentor. He has allowed me to use land to plant my gladiolus corms, in exchange for labor," Tygrett said. "My parents have also played an integral part, in my success. They have helped me expand my project by lending a hand when needed."

"To be successful, I must have attractive displays, competitive pricing and produce quality gladiolus, dahlias, vegetables, bedding plants, and other cut flowers that customers demand," Tygrett said. "I plan on using this method in the future to market new crops like organic vegetables, hay and small grains to local customers and at farmers markets."

The Wilton FFA Chapter member has won the 1997 National Floriculture Proficiency and the 1996 National Agri-Entrepreneur awards. Tygrett was also named the 1997 Iowa Star in Agribusiness. His FFA adviser is Bill Hammes.

#### Long, Hard Hours Helped Gregg With Future Goals

"During the course of the year I participated in many school activities, and did my chores in the evening plus I would work 10- to 12-hour days most weekends," said K.C. Gregg, Spencer, S.D. "This is a trait that I have learned over the years from my parents and grandparents."

Gregg, 20, is a finalist for the National FFA Organization's 1998 American Star in Agribusiness Award, one of the agricultural education organization's highest honors. He will compete with three other finalists for the award at the 71st National FFA Convention Nov. 12-14 in Kansas City, Mo.

"As a freshman I mapped out a plan of what I hoped to be able to accomplish with my SAE, which included winning a proficiency in beef production at the state level," Gregg said. "I surpassed this goal by winning the 1996 National Proficiency Award in Beef Production Placement."

"My job at Red Rock Angus farm has offered me so much in the pursuit of my future goals," Gregg said. "After a few years I increased my responsibilities with Red Rock Angus. This past year I artificially inseminated all the cows and heifers, completed rations for all the cattle on the ranch, and maintained a herd health pro-

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