

Mullen Heads State FFA Organization

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PEACH BOTTOM (Lancaster Co.) — Within one year, Jimmy Mullen watched his greatest disappointment turn into his most satisfying achievement.

The newly-appointed state FFA president said that one year ago, he ran for state FFA office, and was devastated when he was not appointed a position by the nominating committee.

For years his goal was to become a state FFA officer. He was an early achiever, garnering many awards and working hard in many FFA-related activities.

After losing last year's competition, Mullen decided to put the loss behind him and go on to other things. He entered State University of New York at Alfred State and became active in many events, but the loss kept nagging him. It was like the missing piece to a puzzle.

"I wanted to give back to the program that has given so much to me," the 19-year-old said. So, he again applied for a state FFA position.

After a grueling three-day competition with top achievers throughout the state organization, this year, in a resounding victory, Mullen was named president of the state organization.

He believes the year has matured him and will enable him to bring strong leadership to the role. His motto is a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt, who said, "Yesterday's history, tomorrow's a mystery, and today's a gift."

Assisting him are 10 other officers including another Lancaster Countian — Jenniffer Zimmerman, eastern regional vice president. She is a recent Ephrata High School graduate.

Mullen, son of James and Elaine Mullen, Peach Bottom, credits 4-H with helping him develop many of his skills that were later honed through FFA involvement.

Mullen was only 14 years old when he won the state 4-H public speaking contest. Generally these positions are won by high school seniors. His speech, "Pain Plays," focused on baseball woes of a beginner. Mullen continued his 4-H involvement, and also joined Solanco FFA as soon as he entered high school.

Whenever Mullen needed to chose 4-H or FFA projects, he selected public speaking rather than animal judging projects.

"I liked both the prepared and the extemporaneous competition, but it seemed that I generally did better in the unprepared category," Mullen said.

It is his ability to connect emotionally with the listener that seems to create audience appeal. Mullen explained it this way: "If I need to give a 15-minute presentation on the three problems agriculture faces, I would give more of a personal response for the extemporaneous speech. But for the prepared speech, I would have time to do research and would include information similar to that found in a book."

Mullen considers himself fortunate that he was a high school freshman when two Solanco FFA'ers were named president and vice president for the state FFA: Andy Young and his cousin Joy Young.

"They took a small handful of us freshmen and got us involved in chapter and regional programs and leadership conferences. It was a really neat experience working with state officers," Mullen said.

One of the most prestigious events was attending the National Institute of Cooperative Education (NICE). The week-long event focused on working with cooperatives and combined both learning and entertaining experiences.

On the final evening, Mullen was asked to serve as the master of ceremonies for an evening banquet with attendance of 1,500 adults and another 1,500 youth. He was selected when leaders read in his application that he had extensive public speaking involvement.

Mullen was only 16 years old at the time, one of the youngest students in attendance, but he remained calm and relaxed throughout the evening.

He must have done a good job, because the next year, Mullen was invited back as a second-year scholar, only one of five students across the state. He worked in a teaching capacity with students his age and older.

For five years, Mullen placed

in the top 10 in 4-H state public speaking competition.

"I finished my last year in 4-H with a kick," Mullen said. In addition to excelling in public speaking, he also won the top physical fitness award with his first try.

But his goal to become a state FFA officer didn't materialize.

"It was disappointing, and I did not intend to come back," Mullen said of FFA involvement.

He went to SUNY-Alfred State University to study dairy herdsman. He enjoyed working on the school farm. While there, he was asked to judge three FFA speaking contests and to act as a visual judge for livestock judging competition.

Talking with FFA members and hearing of their involvement as state officers made Mullen feel as if he were really missing a lot.

After much wrestling with the pros and cons, Mullen asked for an application to reapply for consideration.

"I went in with more will power, more knowledge of how the judging process worked, and I wasn't as nervous or as hard on myself," Mullen said. But that didn't calm him from roller coaster emotions as he sat through the final judging.

Names were called for the following offices: Amos Aurand, sentinel; Michael Livingston, chaplain; Tony Lee Resh, treasurer; Kristen Pfeifer, secretary; Lisa Allen, reporter; Jessica Hyland, western region vice president; Heidi Good, north central region vice president; Andrew Flinchbaugh, south central region vice president; Jenniffer Zimmerman, eastern region vice president; and Jennifer Whitman, vice president.

"The only position left to be called was president, and I hadn't applied for that," Mullen said. He thought he'd lost again until he heard the words: "the second time is your best time..."

For Mullen, the second time running was indeed his best time. As president, he's putting his studies on hold in order to devote his time to the FFA. His employers at Graywood Farms, Maryland, are allowing him an extremely flexible work schedule to enable him to travel throughout Pennsylvania to fulfil his FFA responsibilities.

Since Mullen does not live on a farm, his decision to pursue a degree and career in dairy herdsman is surprising to some people.

Mullen explains that his parents farmed for eight or nine years after they married. They



Jimmy Mullen is the new FFA president. For one year, he will travel extensively to work with leaders of the state's 147 chapters. After a disappointing loss in running for state FFA office last year, Mullen is proof of the old adage, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again."

had two daughters. When the parents determined that probably neither of the daughters would be interested in taking over the family farm, they moved away from the farm.

Mullen was born after three sisters. From the beginning, he was intrigued with visiting farms of relatives. He began helping at an early age — picking corn, throwing hay bales, and typical farm chores. In high school, he got a job on a nearby farm. At college, he was selected as an intern on the college farm.

"It was a great honor and learning experience to be selected as a freshman," Mullen said. The intern positions normally go to second-year students.

Mullen has worked with dairies that range from 80-170 milking cows.

"All I ever wanted to do was work as a dairy herdsman for a large dairy," Mullen said. He has his sights set on landing a job with a Mid-western dairy with a 2,000-3,000 head herd.

Some of Mullen's other interests and involvements also prepared Mullen for working with others. At Solanco, Mullen was a member of the Lancaster County Youth Peace Council, formed by a nonprofit organization that selects high school students to solve school violence. At first, the

organization was run by adults. Later, Mullen was named president, the first student president of the organization. Mullen worked to have middle school students involved in the program.

He said, "I thought it was important to have students become involved in solving disagreements peacefully at a younger age rather than waiting until they were older."

At school, Mullen was active in band, orchestra, musicals, and wrestling. He is the only 4-year letterman in wrestling at Solanco. He also ran track and field for two years.

At church, Mullen is also active in the senior high youth group, bell choir, and senior choir.

Mullen said that he enjoys learning and leadership. The 4-H motto continues to guide his life in "making the best better."

Mullen is meeting with the other state officers to form a strategy to touch lives in each of the 147 FFA chapters throughout the state.

"I have big footsteps to follow," Mullen said of the examples of Andy Young, Joy Young, and Bertina Robinson, former state officers from Solanco High School. "I will try to fill those footsteps to the best of my ability."

Zimmerman Eager To Pay Back FFA

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REINHOLDS (Lancaster Co.) — Staying calm under stress is one of the qualities a state FFA officer needs.

After completing a three-page application, six rounds of interviews, a speech, and the scrutiny of nine judges, Jen Zimmerman felt stressed, but outwardly, the 18-year-old remained calm. Unlike some of the other 19 applicants vying for a state position on the FFA officers team, Jen was able to eat and sleep during the three-day judging process.

On the last day of the FFA convention, with 1,300 people in attendance, the nominees waited for their names to be called.

"We had no clue who won or didn't. We're all sitting there inwardly pleading, "Please," Jen said.

To hear her name called after

four years of working toward the goal filled Jen with euphoria.

"It's a great honor and it gives me a chance to pay back all that FFA has done for me," she said.

The nominating committee consisted of nine FFA members, two from each of four regional districts and one at large, but none from the chapter a nominee represented.

The 19 nominees worked together in group activities as they were closely monitored by the nominating committee members.

Examined closely also is each person's high school involvement with FFA.

Jen, a member of the Ephrata High School Cloister Chapter, served as both chapter and county FFA president.

Jen raised sheep for many of her projects. She won numerous top awards locally and statewide for her Horned Dorsets and

Southdowns. Her brother Jimmy raises Cheviots and Hampshires. Together they have about 35 ewes on their parents', Jay and JoAnn Zimmerman's, farmette.

This year at the state Farm Show, Jen had the reserve grand champion carcass lamb, a great accomplishment because the lamb was bred and owned by Jen rather than purchased from big-name breeders.

For the past two years, Jen showed the supreme champion ewe over all breeds at Ephrata Fair. She said winning the supreme champion at Elizabethtown Fair in 1995 really motivated her to try to excel in sheep breeding. Jen was also a consistent showmanship champion at local fairs.

Throughout her FFA involvement, Jen also raised capons. (Turn to Page B7)



As FFA eastern vice president, Jen Zimmerman is booked for the year with meetings and responsibilities she needs to fulfill.