

Paul Hostetter Heads 170 FFA Chapters With 8,000 Members

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Food And Family
Features Editor

HOLTWOOD (Lancaster Co.) — As president of the state FFA, Paul Hostetter heads an 11-member leadership team that guides 8,000 members.

Interacting with so many different personalities is a daunting task, but the personable 18-year-old faces the challenge with confidence.

"The advantage of growing up the youngest of four children is that it rounds off my rough edges. They (siblings) are quick to tell you if you're annoying. It teaches you to be accepting of others and to get along with almost everyone," Hostetter said.

Born on a 250-acre farm, Hostetter became immersed in hard work at an early age. Now the energetic recent high school graduate handles a construction job in addition to working on the family farm, operating a contract gilt operation, and heading the FFA.

The son of Jim and Mary Louise Hostetter credits the farm work ethic with teaching him to do quality work.

On the family's 250-acre farm, about 170 acres are crop-farmed, which Hostetter helps plant and harvest. They have about 10 Angus, which graze the meadow.

For many years the family had a 100 sow-to-finish operation. Recently, they scaled down because the buildings needed updated. Instead, Hostetter and his brother Robert contracted with a feed company to raise gilts. The two brothers share responsibilities, and their dad and uncle fill in.

Hostetter said his many achievements are a reflection of the strong influences his family, church, and school has had on him.

"When I was younger, my dad told me, 'if you ever have the opportunity to better yourself, don't turn it down.' His advice still rings in my ears," Hostetter said of his participation in many different experiences.

His mom said that from little on up, her son has always displayed a unique characteristic. "He is my reasonable child. He'd listen intently to conversations and then propose a solution. He is a strategist. He is flexible, has a great personality, and makes friends easily."

Hostetter's older brother Jim had been a charter member of the LMH FFA established in 1993. His involvement sparked Hostetter's interest in FFA. When he became a high school freshman, a vision to become a state officer formed in his mind.

Although Hostetter has a strong hands-on farm experience, he said that his involvement in FFA exposed him to other facets



Paul Hostetter of Hans Herr FFA Chapter heads the state organization with 170 FFA chapters and 8,000 members. He said, "The farm work ethic has taught me to do quality work and be responsible in getting done."

of agriculture. He especially enjoys business management.

The Hans Herr Chapter at Lancaster Mennonite High (LMH) has the distinction of having two of their graduating seniors providing state FFA leadership. In addition to Hostetter, his classmate Jeremy Ranck, Christiana, was named eastern region vice president. It's rare to have two state officers from the same school.

"It's really a credit to our school. We have excellent ag teachers who are very assisting in helping us, and they challenge us (students) to push out of our comfort zones and try new things," Hostetter said of Lehman Metzler and Christopher Ochs.

For example, Hostetter said that he had not considered entering competition in the interview process until his ag teachers en-

tered in national livestock judging.

"The team worked hard and it paid off, which gave us incentive to work even harder," Hostetter said. His FFA chapter also awarded him the outstanding leader award, Dekalb Award, and Keystone Degree.

"I like to experience new things. Through FFA, I had the opportunity to travel a lot."

One of his trips was to Utah with the National Institute for Cooperative Education (NICE).

"We learned about proprietorships, partnerships, cooperatives, and corporations," Hostetter said.

His interest with numbers and the Utah conference fueled his interest in a possible career in ag business.

For one year, Hostetter is putting college on hold so that he can dedicate himself fully to being an effective president, stressing the selected theme "Soaring Above and Beyond" when visiting the state's 170 FFA chapters.

To become a FFA officer, students send in an application. If

the candidates were handed a lollipop, utensil, and plate and told to equate it to FFA. The team members needed to discuss and conclude among themselves before presenting their final decision. They competing against the best students from FFA chapters across the state. All the candidates have leadership skills and are accustomed to taking charge. At the end of the convention, the winners are named during a rousing convention filled with anticipation.

"Opportunities in FFA are endless. The traditional tie to agriculture remains, but FFA is changing to embrace all facets of agriculture, such as floriculture, biotechnology, and public speaking," Hostetter said.

The state officer team includes six students from active farms and five off-farm. "The mix is a good example of what FFA is all about. Fifty percent of our members do not live on farms," Hostetter said.

"FFA teaches such practical skills. Those who participate are not helpless when it comes to fixing things," he said.

Hostetter was selected to at-

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they are accepted, they participate in a three-day interview process during the FFA convention conducted on the Penn State campus.

The applicant does not have the choice for a particular office. Instead, the nominating committee observes all the candidates in group settings to determine the most suitable office for each person.

In addition to traditional requirements such as prepared and impromptu speeches, the applicants are assigned unique situations. For example, in one occa-

tion, the candidates were handed a lollipop, utensil, and plate and told to equate it to FFA. The team members needed to discuss and conclude among themselves before presenting their final decision. They competing against the best students from FFA chapters across the state. All the candidates have leadership skills and are accustomed to taking charge. At the end of the convention, the winners are named during a rousing convention filled with anticipation.

He would like to combine an ag career with pastoring. He said, "Being a Christian, I want to accept the challenge of furthering God's kingdom. I always attempt to live out the Christian life."

When his one-year term as state FFA president is finished, Hostetter would like to work six months as a guide for a hunting service, preferably in Idaho, before continuing his college studies.



"I couldn't have done this on my own," Paul Hostetter said of his appointment as Pennsylvania FFA president. Paul credits his parents, James and Mary Louise Hostetter, for their guidance and support in encouraging him to do his best.

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