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Magazine**

August, 1989  
Volume 62  
Number 2



**THEME:**  
**FFA Alumni - A Program Tool**

# THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION MAGAZINE



August, 1989

Volume 62

Number 2

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## ARTICLE SUBMISSION

Articles and photographs should be submitted to the Editor, Regional Editors, or Special Editors. Items to be considered for publication should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date of issue intended for the article or photograph. All submissions will be acknowledged by the Editor. No items are returned unless accompanied by a written request. Articles should be typed, double-spaced, and include information about the author(s). Two copies of articles should be submitted. A recent photograph should accompany an article unless one is on file with the Editor.

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# Expanding The Horizons

The National Summit for Agricultural Education, held in Washington, D.C. during May, 1989, was a very interesting meeting. It remains to be seen how significant the results will be in terms of program impact and direction. The stated purpose of the second session of the National Summit was to "develop a strategic plan for agricultural education which includes the mission, goals, objectives and action plan for aggressively and cooperatively pursuing the improvement of agricultural education and exerting leadership in contemporary times." Certainly, one could not argue against the desirability of such a plan or the need for leadership in agricultural education to expand its current horizons.

Unfortunately, the participants in this historic meeting left Washington, D.C. without a final draft of the strategic plan in hand. There were some excellent ideas expressed and some statements "hammered out" in, perhaps, draft form. Much of the cleaning up and final editing was deferred to The National Council for coordination and disposition. Confidence in the integrity and wisdom of those serving on The National Council suggests that the job will ultimately be completed.

As a participant in the Summit, I sensed a genuine concern for and need to expand the horizons of agricultural education in this country. It seemed no one was opposed to an expanded mission statement for agricultural education. However, many were anxious to ravish the vocational agriculture program so it might serve additional students. This stampede to expand the mission statement for agricultural education was characterized by an eagerness to eliminate SOE/SAE/supervised experiential education from the mission statement in favor of "learning by doing". The concept of "learning by doing" is not synonymous with "supervised experiential education". Any and all teachers, at whatever level or academic discipline, who are effective employ the concept of "learning by doing". Such a concept is not unique to vocational education nor is it a characteristic that makes a program vocational.

In the fervor to make change and expand the clientele for agricultural education, many were advocating the elimination of the name agriculture from the program. Various alternatives were proposed, but nothing seemed appropriate for all aspects of agricultural education (pre-secondary, secondary, post-secondary, and adult).

The proposed mission statement, when it is finally released, is likely to surprise many with its generality. It must be recognized that the mission statement had to be global enough to cover all aspects of the "agricultural education family". Someone suggested that the situation might be analogies to a mission statement for the entire U.S. Armed Forces, in other words, general enough that the Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy, etc., could all be accommodated. Ultimately, there must be a mission statement for each aspect of agricultural education, i.e. secondary, adult, post-secondary, alumni, teacher education, etc.



BY PHILLIP R. ZURBRICK, EDITOR  
*(Dr. Zurbrick is Professor and Acting Head, Department of Agricultural Education, The University of Arizona.)*

Perhaps the biggest disappointment in the deliberation of The Summit was the failure of those who perceived themselves as "thinkers" and "idea" people to think big enough! Much of the thinking was done in terms of alternatives and changing what exists and has been successful. The real visionaries were not heard in the milieu! Instead of making agricultural education more than vocational agriculture at the secondary level, the prevailing attitude seemed to be one of changing vocational agriculture into a hybrid agricultural literacy program.

The real visionaries were those not hung up with: "it cannot be done;" "it will never work;" "there is not enough money;" or "traditionally we don't do these things." Rather they were saying, let's make stronger and more relevant the vocational program while creating **additional programs** that will serve new clientele with more appropriate delivery systems. The visionaries were not shirking away from "about agriculture" programs because others were involved or because it was such a large undertaking. Nor did they visualize agricultural education's only contribution to agricultural literacy being limited to "handing out brochures" to elementary school teachers. Rather, they were saying that all aspects of the "agricultural education family" can and should contribute to the enhancement of agricultural literacy in this country. Members of the National Young Farmer Education Association were describing ways in which NYFEA could contribute to an "about agriculture" educational effort not only for youngsters, but also for senior citizens!

The ideas were great, but focus and organization was lacking. Such is often the case with a vision and should not be cause for rejection. A strategic plan for agricultural education must be correlated with our values. However, it is obvious that values too narrowly stated can become deterrents to program expansion. Those who, for instance, value

*(Continued on page 21)*

## About the Cover

FFA Alumni raises \$26,000 at the national convention auction. Monies raised at this auction are designated for FFA scholarships. Photo courtesy of National FFA Alumni.

# FFA Alumni Plays A Vital Role In Governmental Affairs

Governmental affairs is one aspect of the National FFA Alumni Association that has become very important to the agricultural education program and the FFA. Most people think of governmental affairs as politics and lobbyists. Although these terms are involved in governmental affairs, they are not the objectives the National FFA Alumni Association is seeking in their governmental system.

FFA Alumni members support agricultural education through key contacts and personal visits with legislators. Members hope to inform these people about our programs and how important they are to those involved. It is important to agricultural education and the FFA that FFA alumni members make personal contacts, create an awareness, and educate members of influential groups, such as the legislative community, regarding the contributions and benefits agricultural education programs make on society.

## National FFA Alumni Support

As a non-profit organization, the National FFA Alumni Association is limited in its ability to be formally involved in the process that other interest groups are involved, especially direct lobbying. The National FFA Alumni Association, through its governmental affairs program, promotes, informs, and educates those in positions to guide and advance the legislative process to build even stronger programs through federal and local community support for agricultural education.

The National FFA Alumni Executive Director, Robert (Woody) Cox, spends approximately twenty percent of his time with governmental affairs. The Executive Director contacts key legislative personnel and their assistants in Washington, D.C. Mr. Cox provides these key people with information about successful agricultural education programs that are conducted in our country, as well as our program's goals. This vital information and personal contacts made by the Executive Director build a network that helps support legislation that may affect agricultural education.

Those who serve on Capitol Hill search for various sources of information about a specific piece of legislation, for instance, when a bill is being organized. The Executive Director is listed as a resource person for agricultural education for legislative assistants. As a resource person, he is considered an expert on the needs of agricultural educators.

## Summer Internship Program Successful

The National FFA Alumni Association also involves other people on the national level to serve in this governmental affairs program. Each summer the National FFA Alumni Association selects an agricultural educator to serve as the governmental affairs intern in Washington, D.C. I had the



BY CHARLES E. MILLER

(Mr. Miller is a Teacher of Agriculture, Amanda-Clearcreek High School, Amanda, Ohio.)

opportunity to serve in this position in 1988. This liaison position, which lasts for a four-week period, concentrates on developing new relationships on Capitol Hill that can be followed up by the Executive Director. This position is funded by the National FFA Alumni Association.

There are two objectives of this program. One objective is to develop a positive image of agricultural education and the FFA among legislators and support groups. The second objective is to inform influential people in Washington, D.C., about agricultural education and the FFA. This individual usually makes over sixty different visitations during the program, informing and nurturing possible relationships that the National FFA Alumni Association could use in the future.

The National FFA Alumni Association's position comes from a very basic principle that operates on Capitol Hill -- grass roots organization. Grass roots organization, means that the National FFA Alumni Association is a group of people from local hometowns in every voting district in this country. The people who are members of FFA Alumni affiliates are people who vote in the elections every year, support the FFA, and hopefully support their local legislator.

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Working with the FFA members Alumni members keep local school administrators informed about what is going on in the FFA program.



# Computer Technology Resources

## Do You Want to Telecommunicate?

Have you ever wanted to subscribe to a remote data base service such as the AgriData, ACRES, The Source, or CompuServe? Remote data base services hold massive amounts of information that may be useful to you in the agriculture program. Current agricultural business information, news, and markets are available from these services. Some services specialize in agricultural information. AgriData, through its Ag Ed Network, even offers agricultural curriculum and lesson plans. Once you decide to try a remote data base service you soon discover that you need additional hardware and software for your computer.

Telecommunication seems simple; basically you need a telephone, a computer, and a modem with telecommunications software. If you have a computer and a telephone in your office or classroom, then all you need to buy is a modem and software. Unfortunately it isn't that simple. There are a number of questions to consider, such as: What type of phone service does the school have? How do I connect my phone line to the modem? How do I select the proper modem for my computer? What telecommunications software do I need to make my modem work?

Many teachers have become frustrated trying to find adequate answers to these questions. To reduce some of this frustration, let's answer a few of these questions.

What type of phone service does your school have? Basically, if you can dial an 800 number directly from the phone in your classroom or office, then you have what you need to connect to a remote data base. In addition, the line needs to be "private". By that I mean that someone in another part of the building can't pick up their phone and listen in while you are talking. Lastly, your telephone needs to be connected to the junction box by a simple modular connector (with four wires) rather than by a large round cable containing many wires. Your local telephone company can help you solve these problems. Usually, it is not expensive to have the necessary changes made to your phone.

What is the proper modem for my computer? Like many other electronic products, the prices of modems have dropped dramatically. The prices for most modems range from less than \$100 to about \$400. There are two types of modems: internal and external. Internal modems are installed in a slot inside your computer. External modems connect to your computer via a serial port. If your computer does not have a serial port (such as an Apple IIe), then you would need to purchase a serial card to install in one of the slots inside your computer. If your computer does not have a serial port, then it may be less expensive to purchase an internal modem.

Another consideration when selecting a modem is speed. The speed at which modems operate is measured in bits per second, or bauds. The most common speeds for modems



By W. WADE MILLER, SPECIAL EDITOR  
*(Dr. Miller is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education, Iowa State University.)*

are: 300, 1200, and 2400. Even though the least expensive modem may be 330-baud, it is advisable to purchase at least a 1200-baud modem. The extra speed of a 1220-baud modem will reduce the total amount of time you are connected to a remote data base service. And since you will be charged for the amount of time you are connected, a 1200-baud or 2400-baud modem can quickly pay for itself.

What software do I need to make the modem work? Communications software, working with a modem and telephone line, turns your computer into a telecommunications terminal. Many modems are sold with telecommunications software. Unfortunately, the particular program supplied with the modem may not be the one you want or need. For example, if you have an Apple II series computer and you use AppleWorks, then you would want a telecommunications program that stores data in AppleWorks format. Some telecommunications programs are designed to work with or become part of, certain word processing programs.

No matter what brand of computer you use, your telecommunications program should allow you to store data on disk in a format that your favorite word processing package can read. Most word processors read ASCII files. This feature is extremely important. To save time (and money) you will want to quickly store data received from the data base service so that you can "log off" the remote data base. After you are logged off, you can use your word processor at any time to edit and print the file. It is easy to create information sheets or worksheets in this fashion.

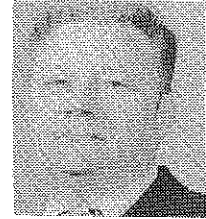
If your modem does not come with adequate telecommunications software, there are a number of high-quality programs available from computer user groups and from commercial sources. Prices range from a few dollars for some public domain programs to about \$100 for many commercially developed products. Telecommunications software is no place to skimp. If you have a poor telecommunications program, your modem will not function to its full potential, and you will not enjoy using a remote data base service. It is advisable to "try" before you "buy" when it comes to telecommunications software. Ask someone you know to demonstrate the program they use or ask for a demonstration at your favorite computer store.

# Unifying FFA Alumni Support For Agricultural Education

What do you think of when you hear the words "FFA Alumni"? You should think, "The Alumni is my support group. They help me financially and support me in my many activities and, as an advisor, I would not want to be without them." Whether you have or you have not been associated with an alumni group, we would like to share with you what the Missouri FFA Alumni program means to the local chapters.

First, let's look at what the National Alumni Association does to help you. The National FFA Alumni Association became a reality on May 12, 1972. It has grown steadily each year since its beginning and has reached over 30, 000 members. The annual meeting is in Kansas City on Wednesday prior to the National FFA Convention. Keynote speakers and a business meeting are held. Several award recipients are given tickets to a Dale Carnegie session. Awards are given to affiliate and scrapbook winners. Outstanding Achievement Awards and Legion of Merit recipients are recognized. Life members are given a gold life membership card, certificate, and a subscription to *The National Future Farmer*.

The Missouri Alumni was started in 1976 and has had intermittent periods of growth during this time. On the state level, a 30-page FFA Alumni Handbook has been published and given to every advisor in the state. This handbook gives the advisor all the necessary information on how to organize an alumni affiliate, suggested program of activities, awards, and services provided by the alumni. Every two years, the handbook is updated and reprinted. Several Washington Conference Program Scholarships are given at the State FFA Convention. Each student who receives this award is escorted on stage with their local alumni president. A \$300.00 Raymond Hagan Scholarship is presented to one senior student. This scholarship is given in the name of Raymond Hagan, former supervisor, Missouri Department of



By JOYCE E. SAYRE AND RICHARD E. LINHARDT

(Ms. Sayre is Missouri State FFA Alumni President, Milan, Missouri; Dr. Linhardt is Associate Professor, Agricultural Education, University of Missouri-Columbia.)

Elementary and Secondary Education, Agricultural Education Division.

A reception is held on Friday morning of the State FFA Convention for advisors, students, alumni, and guests. The alumni session features a special keynote speaker. The alumni recognizes the FFA state officer team, and gives plaques and certificates to the first and second place alumni affiliates and alumni scrapbook winners. Each affiliate entering a book receives a Certificate of Recognition. We also have a booth at the State Convention with a blue and gold display board with pictures and captions of various happenings. Scrapbooks are displayed and alumni newsletters are handed out. A letter is handed to every State Farmer as they leave the stage telling them about the alumni and how they can join.

Also, a booth at the FFA building at the Missouri State Fair is set up by the alumni. An alumni member is present each day to talk to visitors and answer any questions they may have. A display of alumni literature and the state's first place scrapbook and pictures of the previous year award winners are displayed at this booth.

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Raymond Hagan Scholarship Award Winner Michelle Kates with Joyce Sayre, Alumni President.



Gold Emblem Affiliate — Joyce Sayre, State President Milan, MO; second from left is show receiving the gold affiliate award for Missouri.

# "The FFA Alumni — A Program Tool"

Community involvement and support is vital to quality programs in vocational education in agriculture. In the 1920's when vocational agriculture was young, federal legislation provided policy and most of the funding. Today, we find very little policy or funding being provided at the national level. Therefore, administrative decisions, funding, and policy are being controlled at the local level. The need for local support is vital if the program is to grow. Vocational agriculture instructors have always been the leaders in getting individuals involved in supporting the program. As this shift in policy and funding was occurring very rapidly in the 1960's, a master plan to unify individuals on the local level was developed and in 1972 the FFA Alumni Association was chartered. The FFA Alumni has proven to be an excellent management system for unifying community support which has grown in membership and support every year. The present membership is over 30,000 with 1,200 local affiliates.

State and national activities of the FFA Alumni have proven to be a valuable resource in supporting agricultural education. As director of the FFA Alumni for the past 14 years, I have seen many excellent support activities at the national level in governmental affairs. These activities are of great importance. I know that having former students who are successful in the agricultural industry and unified in their support will be of increasing importance in the future. A congressional staff member recently stated that he was very impressed that 30,000 products of the program



BY ROBERT W. COX, THEME EDITOR

(Mr. Cox is Theme Editor for this issue and Executive Director, National FFA Alumni Association, Alexandria, Virginia.)

have joined together as a support group. He stated that he was not aware of any secondary program that has as large a unified support group. This congressional staff member knew very little about agricultural education, and now, because of the FFA Alumni, he has a positive image.

This magazine issue deals with local, state, and national FFA Alumni support. The theme authors have provided many firsthand observations on ways to utilize the FFA Alumni. We need stronger community support if agricultural education is to meet the training needs for the agricultural industry.

As we approach the 21st century, the FFA Alumni will be one of the essential areas that will affect the direction of agricultural education. We must all be aware of its importance and become involved in providing the leadership necessary to help the FFA Alumni grow in its support at the local, state, and national levels.

## FFA Alumni Plays A Vital Role In Governmental Affairs

(Continued from page 4)

### Grass Roots Effort At The Local Level

Although lobbyists are big supporters and sources of influence in legislation today, the local voters back home are more important to the congressional legislators. It is from this grass roots position that the National FFA Alumni Association builds its strength as a viable source of information on the needs of agricultural education.

FFA alumni members are not only providing information on the national level, but they continue the same support mechanism to the state and local levels through local FFA Alumni affiliates. The financing of schools and the quality of programs are being reviewed and evaluated by state and local boards of education as well as legislators. Local FFA Alumni affiliates are taking the initiative to contact their local board of education members, as well as legislators, and involving them in agricultural education programs and the FFA.

FFA Alumni members are providing information about the quality, success, and influence of their local agricultural education program and FFA chapter. They are writing their congressional representatives about Building Our American Communities projects conducted to improve the quality of



Alumni members assist FFA members in telling their success stories through local media's.

their community park, for example. Local board of education members are participating in FFA Alumni projects that raise funds to build new facilities for students to learn more about agriculture. FFA Alumni affiliates are funding local school administrators and board of education members to attend the National FFA Convention.

These grass root people are making sure that their community and local leaders know how important agricultural education and the FFA are to the future development and growth of their communities. This phase is probably the most successful part of the FFA Alumni program.

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# Leader In Agricultural Education: O. Donald Meaders

During the annual meeting of the American Association of Teacher Educators in Agriculture (AATEA) held in St. Louis, Missouri on December 5, 1988, Dr. O. Donald Meaders received the AATEA Distinguished Service Award which included a certificate, a plaque, and a check for \$500. The award is given annually to one outstanding professional in agricultural education for scholarly research, teaching, and service. In presenting the award to Don, Dr. Jim Leising from the University of California - Davis, indicated that "Dr. Meaders is truly one of the premier professors of agricultural education."

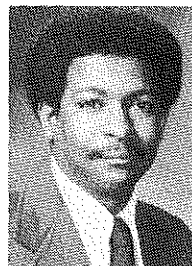
Otis Donald Meaders was born in Doniphan, Nebraska. He graduated as valedictorian from Phillips Consolidated Schools in May, 1941. Don received his B.S. and M.S. degrees in Agricultural Education from the University of Nebraska. Between July 1947 to June 1950, he **taught agricultural education** at Lewiston Community Schools, Lewiston, Nebraska. Don also taught agricultural education (and served as a **supervising teacher** for the University of Nebraska), at Wilbur Public Schools, Wilbur, Nebraska from July 1951 to June 1953.

In 1953 he moved to Michigan and started work on a doctorate at Michigan State University (MSU). His doctorate in agricultural education and a minor in educational administration was received in 1957 and his dissertation was entitled, "Practice Advocated by Selected National Agencies and Organizations for Implementing Local Programs of Vocational Agriculture, 1836-1954." During the period 1955-1958, Don was employed in the Michigan Department of Education as a **consultant** in vocational education and vocational agricultural education. He helped plan and conduct in-service education for teachers and administrators; and conducted some research regarding the use of FFA to enhance teaching-learning.

His first appointment at Michigan State University, in a professorial position, came in 1958. His assignment was as a **teacher educator**, located in the upper peninsula of Michigan, in a regional resource development project. The work included teaching, research and service activities to promote improved opportunities, both in-school and out-of-school, for youth to prepare for employment. Subsequent assignments at MSU have included:

**1961-62.** He spent two years on an institutional building project for MSU in Taiwan. While in Taiwan, he was the **Assistant Team Leader** and **consultant** on curriculum improvement at National Chung Hsing University. Don initiated a research program for the Department of Agricultural Education, National Chung Hsing University during this period.

**1962-63; 1968; and 1975.** During these periods, he directed research projects to study the educational occupational



BY EDDIE A. MOORE

*(Dr. Moore is Professor, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Michigan State University.)*

attainments of graduates from Taiwan vocational and technical agriculture programs. The 1968 and 1975 projects were conducted during sabbatical leaves from MSU

**1963-1975.** When Don returned to Michigan in 1963, for over a ten-year period, he provided in-service for teachers of vocational agriculture in the state; assisted in major studies of need and feasibility for vocational-technical education in Michigan; directed projects focusing on improvement of instruction in agriculture; served for three years as the chairman of a national committee on innovations in teacher education in agriculture; and was elected by his colleagues in the College of Education to serve on the University Academic Council (two terms) and the University Committee on Faculty Affairs and Faculty Compensation (two terms).

**1976-77.** For over a year, Don was **Acting Team Leader** for five months and then a member of the MUCIA-Nepal rural development project located at the Institute of Agriculture & Animal Science, Rampur, Nepal. His major assignment focused on staff development for curriculum and course revision concurrent with improved methods of instruction.

**1979-81.** In January 1979, Dr. Meaders was appointed **Acting Chariman** of the Department of Secondary Education and Curriculum. In July 1979 he became **Chairman**. The Department included five faculty groups: Vocational-Technical and Applied Arts; Curriculum and Instruction; Educational Systems Development; Highway Traffic and Safety Education; and Social-Philosophical Foundations of Education. There were approximately 30 FTE's in the Department. In July 1981 the College of Education's reorganization plan eliminated two departments and restructured the programs into four (instead of six) departments. As a result of this change, Don moved with the graduate program in agricultural education to the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

**August 1981 to present.** Since moving to the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, his assignment has included teaching, research and service activities, mainly in the area of agricultural and extension education. He conducted needs assessment for agricultural education in six



counties of Michigan (Arenac, Bay, Huron, Midland, Saginaw, and Tuscola) in cooperation with Delta College and the Cooperative Extension Service County Directors.

In addition, his teaching responsibilities have included the graduate student/faculty seminar (in Agricultural and Extension Education), and three courses: Instructional Strategies, Agricultural Education and Rural Development, and Adult Education in Agriculture.

Effective July 1, 1983 a new Department was established in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources — the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education. Don served as chairman of two key committees for the development of the new Department: the Curriculum Committee and the Bylaws Committee.

Dr. Meaders has been a leader in the international area. During the past several years, he directed the dissertations for 22 persons including students in agricultural education and vocational-technical education. Five of those dissertations have involved studies in developing countries. His work in the international field has involved assignments in Taiwan, Korea, Nepal and the Caribbean.

In Taiwan, Dr. Meaders worked with the Ministry of Education, the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction and two universities on projects and programs to improve instruction and research in agriculture. During the summer of 1983 he directed a five-week study tour in Taiwan. Students from three universities were provided a first-hand look at the agricultural developments in Taiwan. Emphasis was placed on the role of agricultural education in the preparation of persons to carry out agricultural development projects. During July and August 1985, Don directed a six-week study tour in Taiwan for 13 students (seven from Caribbean countries and six from the U.S.). The focus was on Agricultural Development and Education. He served a two-year term (1984-86) on the Board of Directors of the newly formed international association named Association for International Agricultural Educators. Seeing the need for such an organization, Don played a very significant role in establishing this association. He is currently serving as Secretary of the renamed association called "Association of International Agricultural and Extension Education." In January, 1986, he co-authored a commissioned paper for UNESCO titled "A Case Study: Incorporation of Environmental Education into the Vocational Agriculture Curriculum and Agricultural Teacher Education in Michigan, U.S.A."

In Nepal, his work included personnel development through special seminars, workshops and individualized counseling; and curriculum and course revision with emphasis on a pre-professional one year program. In March and April of 1987, he was one of three members of a team to evaluate the progress on an AID/World Bank project at the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science in Rampur, Nepal.

During January-March, 1984 Don served in Trinidad and Tobago as a **consultant** to the newly established Agricultural Teacher Education Center. His work centered on the teaching program for twenty experienced teachers of agricultural science who were in a 9-month retraining

program. During July, 1984 he attended the African Conference on Agricultural Education held at Yaounde, Cameroon. Don was one of the speakers and his topic was "Higher Education in Agriculture in the United States." During October and November, 1984, he served for seven weeks as an agricultural education **consultant** to the Caribbean Agricultural Extension Project. Don was involved in assessing the needs for strengthening agricultural education programs in Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. The emphasis was placed on reviewing the vocational agriculture programs in the secondary schools and in the technical institutes. In addition, a paper on his observations and recommendations was presented at the Third General Meeting of the Regional Agricultural Extension Coordinating Committee in St. Kitts, November 13-15, 1984.

During July-August, 1986 he served as a **consultant** on extension to the Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, Taipei. During that period he gave the **keynote address** at a National Conference on Extension; prepared reports on a) The Groups Farming Projects, b) Young Farmer Development Project, and c) the "I Love My Village" and Rural Housing Development Projects; and presented a paper on evaluation of extension personnel at a meeting of extension specialists from County and Provincial Farmer Associations.

During October 1986, Don served as coordinator of the international section at the National Conference on Postsecondary and Adult Education in Agriculture. Don began a one-year consultantship in February, 1989. he intends to continue a twenty-five year longitudinal research study in Taiwan.



**Dr. O. Donald Meaders**

O. Donald Meaders is one of the premier professors of agricultural education and is most deserving of the highest award given by the profession, the **DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD**. As a result of his contributions to Michigan, the United States and many countries around the world, he is also one of the premier leaders in agricultural education.

# FFA Alumni: An Educational Tool At Local And State Levels

It is becoming a reality in today's agricultural education program that professional educators are not experts on every aspect of agriculture that needs to be taught. Marketing, technological support services, computer applications, processing, agriscience, and natural resources management are but a few of the "new areas of agriculture". Therefore, agriculture educators must become masters of information. They must know who the experts are in a given subject area; where they can get printed materials, audio-visual aids, and software on various topics; and be able to assist students in using these resources. This would be a behemoth task at least, and one that many are simply unable to accomplish with their current work loads and the expectations of supervisors.

This is an area where FFA alumni would be of primary assistance. Many advisors/instructors and state staffs have realized this and developed FFA alumni support. Imagine the following possibilities and let your imagination and creativity loose - I'm certain you will agree - the possibilities are endless!!!

## Agricultural Education Programs

Meeting with an FFA Alumni affiliate that is already established, or beginning one, gives you the opportunity to know a community and its resources from the aspect of a great number of people. (The old theory of two heads being better than one can go on to ad infinitum.) Having developed topical areas for curriculums, the FFA alumni membership can identify and develop a list of potential resource persons on various subjects. They can contact the potential resources and ask if they would assist with the agricultural education program. The alumni could then get specific topical areas from the resource people who showed an interest in participating.

Groups of alumni are great for reviewing resource materials that you are constantly being bombarded with but can never find the time to review. They can develop materials or identify where materials are available.

When your curriculum and the diversity of your student population and their interests requires that courses be broken down into smaller groups, alumni may serve as group leaders. Station education in the classroom will become more and more prevalent, and the alumni "aides" will be critical to maximum value and flexibility in your instructional programs.

When field days, demonstrations, and educational events need to be planned, FFA alumni members can be very helpful, if not indispensable. These were the times I realized the potential of the FFA Alumni. For example, the FFA Alumni organized a safety fair for my students. Time involved went from days to one or two short telephone calls, and the efficiency of education increased greatly.

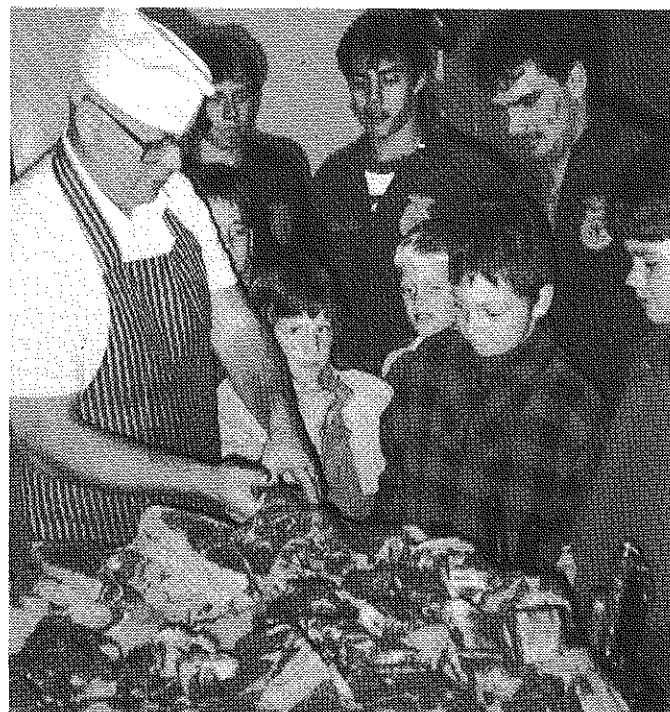


BY KEVIN A. KEITH

(Mr. Keith is State FFA Alumni Coordinator, State Department of Public Instruction, Madison, Wisconsin.)

Alumni members can serve on task forces, advisory committees, ad hoc committees, and other groups that might support your department. Revising and re-establishing a curriculum is a tremendous undertaking, and most educators in agriculture are in one-person departments. Using alumni as sounding boards, developers, critics, etc., can help in the all-around development and will add to the credibility of your work when completed. Another advantage of FFA alumni support is the fact that more community members will be aware of what is new in your curriculum and how and why it was changed. They will be more supportive because of their part in developing it.

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Alumni members organize, plan, direct and instruct during educational programs, such as Food For America tours. Using real experts can expand a program into areas that the local instructor may not feel confident in, and the instructor can learn, right along with the students.

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# FFA Alumni Coordinate Trip To National FFA Convention

"Though I had always heard about how good the National FFA Convention was, no words I had heard actually did justice to the fantastic experience I had. It was, without a doubt, the best thing which has happened to me in a long, long time."

Mr. Larry Lindquist, Assistant Superintendent at Montague Area Public Schools in Michigan, expressed these feelings after attending the National FFA Convention last fall. He was one of ten Michigan school administrators who participated in the Michigan FFA Alumni Association's trip to the 61st National FFA Convention. The Alumni collaborated with local FFA chapters, the Michigan Farm Bureau, and the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Michigan State University.

The trip sponsors hoped to increase administrators' awareness of the great potential of the FFA and to strengthen their commitment to agricultural education and the FFA in their local communities. The goals were met as illustrated in the following quote from Mr. Lindquist.

"My faith in American youth was certainly renewed along with my commitment to the necessity of a better agricultural program in Montague. Now, more than ever, I am determined to find a way to strengthen the agricultural experiences locally."



Larry Lindquist, Assistant Superintendent at Montague Area Public Schools, expresses his feelings about future administrators' activities, while Cheryl Hahnenberg, Principal of Chesaning High School, observes proceedings at the Michigan Administrators' January meeting during the Winter Technical Agriculture Workshop.

## Planning

The idea to sponsor a statewide effort to send administrators to the National FFA Convention was conceived during the Spring of 1988. Previous administrator involvement efforts, both in Michigan and throughout the country, had been initiated by local chapters. This effort was the first time a state attempted and succeeded in taking such a large group to the National FFA Convention. By summer and early fall, many local FFA Alumni chapters were working aggressively toward the goal of sending one of their



BY JACK ELLIOT AND HARRY GARDNER

(Dr. Elliot is an Assistant Professor and Dr. Gardner is Professor, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Michigan State University.)

administrators on the trip. Ten chapters reached this goal during the first year of the program.

Not all of the administrators were excited to attend the convention. Mr. Ray Davis, Marshall, Michigan principal, admitted that he had to be forced to attend the convention, but now refers to the trip as "one of the greatest experiences of my life."

## Kansas City Itinerary

Former Michigan State FFA President, Mr. Vic Verchereau, and Dr. Jake Wamhoff, Chair of the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Michigan State University, guided the administrators during their visit to Kansas City. Their itinerary included the National FFA Alumni banquet and auction, the National Floriculture Contest, the National Agricultural Career Show, and several FFA Convention sessions.

The administrators were impressed with the logistics and activities associated with the convention. One administrator said:

"Students get a better education out here (in Kansas City) than they do spending a week back home in the classroom."

Mr. Cleland Methner, Superintendent of Grant Schools in Michigan, added:

"The national convention is a confidence builder. All students should have this type of experience."

Another administrator stated:

"Twenty-thousand youngsters had a great value system imposed on them during the convention."

Mr. Ronald Beegle, assistant principal of Leslie High School, concluded:

"In my twelve years of education, it [the convention] was one of the most impressive and well organized events I have had the opportunity to observe. What was even more impressive was the realization that it was organized and run by the young people involved in the FFA. It was an experience that I will not forget."

## Back Home In Michigan

Following his experience at the FFA Convention, the superintendent from Durand Area Schools, Mr. Patrick Murphy, outlined the following goals for Durand's agricultural education program:

1. Talk with the local FFA Chapter about the experience at the National Convention.
2. Arrange speaking arrangements for FFA members to local service clubs and the local board of education.
3. Review curriculum programs for the possibility of networking with other academic disciplines.
4. Attempt to obtain local financial help for students attending the National FFA Convention.
5. Grant the use of some additional school property for FFA projects.

Mr. Lindquist offered to create a "highlight" video tape of the Convention for distribution to schools throughout the state. In addition, he invited a national FFA officer to speak at his school

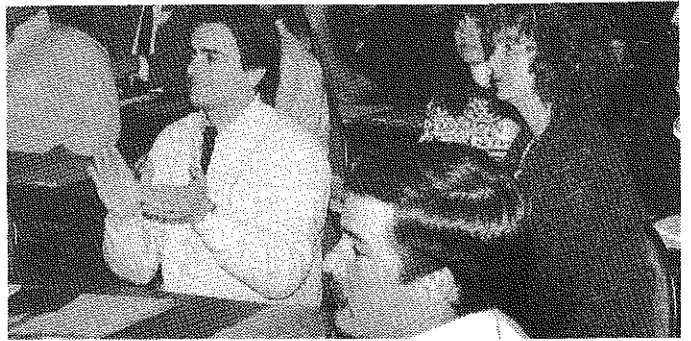
One administrator suggested:

"Schools should not focus on sending the lower groups of students to 'ag' classes. FFA and agricultural education should have an opportunity to enlist the schools' finest students, and 'ag' classes should not be used simply as a dumping ground. National Honor Society students are generally exceptional individuals, however, many of these students lack the necessary leadership skills needed to conduct effective meetings. The FFA organization is an excellent training ground for this kind of help."

### Future Activities

The ten administrators met with representatives from the Michigan FFA Alumni during the month of January to develop a plan to share information with other educators and to expand the program to include more administrators in 1989, as well as to involve counselors and other teachers at the state and national level.

Mr. Davis commented about inviting counselors and teachers to attend the convention:



Secondary agricultural education teachers and high school principals attend the Michigan Winter Technical Agriculture Workshop. Increased participation with administrators was a proposed goal of the Michigan FFA Alumni Association.

"They may not want to come, but once they're here they won't regret it."

Specific ideas for the future include:

1. Sending other high school student leaders to the state convention.
2. Encouraging other teachers or administrators to chaperone the state or national convention delegation (even leave the agricultural teacher at home occasionally).
3. Inviting counselors, other teachers, board members, and administrators to the state or national conventions.
4. Presenting information about the FFA and agricultural education to administration and educational organizations.

### Conclusion

The challenge is for other state alumni associations to coordinate trips to Kansas City. The scope of benefits for a state is immeasurable. Other state associations can look forward to receiving comments such as this one by Mr. Lindquist:

"I can only say 'thanks' for one of the most memorable and meaningful three days of my life."

The state of Michigan now has ten of the proudest and most dedicated FFA supporters in the nation. Next year it will have more.

## FFA Alumni Plays A Vital Role

*(Continued from page 7)*

Local FFA alumni members feel more at ease and have closer contact with local leaders. Many local FFA alumni affiliates have saved their agricultural education program from the cut of a budget knife. In Ohio over twenty programs have been saved by FFA alumni members.

### Change Is In The Air

If agricultural education is to survive, we must inform people about the personal development activities in agricultural education programs, as well as the contributions to the economy. We have a program that has a positive impact on hundreds of thousands of young people. Let us inform others and sell this unique concept.

It is the responsibility of all of us in agricultural education, not just the FFA alumni, to develop positive and supportive relationships with individuals who will influence our future. We need to cultivate a friendship with our support

groups and legislators at all levels: national, state, and local.

Agricultural education is a non-partisan issue and deserves our best efforts to build a strong support group for our future development. Greater efforts are needed by every agricultural educator to publicize the strength and value of our program. FFA alumni affiliates and members are providing this vital role through governmental affairs activities.

FFA alumni members are not lobbyists, but supporters of agricultural education. This support takes many shapes. Through the governmental affairs program, the National FFA Alumni Association provides information to responsive legislators, and FFA Alumni affiliates contact local leaders about decisions that could affect agricultural education.

As a citizen of this country, it is important that you let your legislators know your concerns, because the legislators are not likely to look to you for information, unless you let them know your feelings. The FFA Alumni plays a vital role in governmental affairs.

## Unifying FFA Alumni Support For Agricultural Education

*(Continued from page 6)*

There are numerous things the local alumni does to help chapters in Missouri. (1) Some alumni chapters purchase the top creed speaker's FFA jacket. (2) The top six creed speakers get their registration fee and transportation cost paid to the National FFA Convention. (3) Some alumni chapters sponsor FFA officers and members to the National Convention by picking up food and lodging expenses. (4) There are always alumni who go as chaperones to various FFA activities. (5) Alumni members help in various ways with contests. They may take students to a dairy or beef farm for work outs, an alumni may make up a test for the FFA Knowledge team, a soil conservationist may work with the Soils team, or another alumni member may provide transportation for contest team training. (6) Many agribusiness classes have a variety of alumni businessmen speak to them. (7) Some alumni affiliates offer a scholarship to one senior who is going to college and majoring in agriculture. (8) Often pens and animals for the barnyard during "Food For America" Week are provided. (9) Alumni weigh livestock and help in getting animals ready for showing at the county fair. (10) Help in chaperoning students at Barnwarming is provided by the alumni. (11) Several alumni chapters participate at the FFA Chapter Banquet. (12) Students who receive the State or American Farmer degree are often honored by the Alumni Chapter by giving them an engraved plaque. (13) In some chapters, the alumni affiliate provides a plaque to be given to a freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior who has placed first in their class in extemporaneous or public speaking. (14) Certificates of Appreciation are given by the alumni to people each year who have supported the chapter and alumni affiliates. (15) Recognition to individuals in the community by giving Outstanding Alumni Award plaques for their support to the local chapter is also an activity of the alumni affiliate.

Probably every advisor's first thought when asked about starting an alumni is "I don't want an alumni; that will just be another job for me and I don't have enough hours in the

day as it is!" Please STOP AND RETHINK. "The alumni is your support group. They are there to help you build a stronger program. Yes, you need their help and financial support."



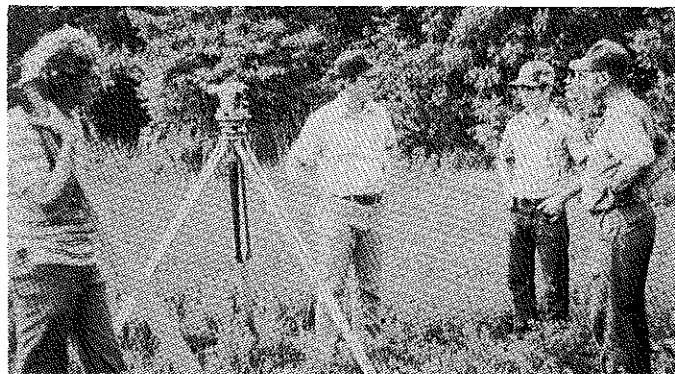
1987-88 Missouri State Officer Team becomes life Alumni Members. Michelle Kates, Alice Hoehne, Mindy Spoonster, Johna Ellis - front row; Diane Kruse, Dana Alumbaugh, Debbie Powell, Christy Norton - second row; tim Temples, Alan Weber, Aaron Nevils, John Martin, Shane Geib - back row.



Mound City Alumni — Second Place Scrapbook: June Humphrey with John Zeliff, Advisor.

## FFA Alumni: An Educational Tool at Local and State Levels

*(Continued from page 10)*



Alumni members from the Soil Conservation Service assist chapter members with surveying land improvements. This assists the member in improving and expanding the skills and competencies a student achieves.

### FFA Programs

As we expand our agricultural education programs into the "new areas of agriculture", we will need to develop FFA activities that support new competencies, skills, and excellence in our students. In order to offer new activities, we will need an increased amount of personpower. Here is where the FFA Alumni has excelled in many school districts and states. FFA alumni can be chaperones, coordinators, judges, coaches, hosts/hostesses, photographers, salespersons, delivery persons, drivers, directors, typists, sponsors, and much, much more. Simply make a list of all the activities you would like assistance with and have each of your alumni members check those activities in which they have an interest. Then file those forms, or better yet, enter the information on a computer data base (something else an alumni can

*(Continued on page 23)*



## Is There An FFA Alumni In Your Future?

Imagine a small, consolidated, rural, east central Nebraska school district, with 152 students grades nine through twelve. Of those students, 105 young men and women were enrolled in five Agricultural Education classes. This was a one teacher department, with a first year, inexperienced instructor. No matter how ambitious he was, this neophyte teacher needed help! With no money in the budget for even a half-time assistant, he had to look to other ways to accomplish the realm of activities that accompanied a rural, agricultural, competition oriented school district.

Asking students to volunteer their parents for driving, chaperoning, team preparation, field trips, fairs, contests, etc., was one obvious source of help. This worked well, but there must be a better way that would be less work for the instructor.

The instructor had heard about an organization called FFA Alumni, which consisted of interested persons who wanted to assist the Agricultural Education/FFA in a school. Some people said an FFA Alumni Affiliate created more work for the instructor, and took time away from the daily educational items. Others said that a well-organized, self-running Alumni could be a great asset to the instructor and the program. This instructor, siding with the second group, began a steering committee that led to the chartering of the East Butler FFA Affiliate in 1978.

This first year teacher was myself, and since that time I have experienced many success stories about the FFA Alumni Affiliates and the positive, lasting effect they have had on Agriculture Education in many high schools. Some of these affiliates have been directly responsible for the survival of the Agricultural Education/FFA Program in a number of schools.

In the beginning, while the affiliate is being organized, it is more work for the instructor. However after it is organized the affiliate can be a great asset to the total department. And it will create no extra work for the instructor, if he/she serves as advisor instead of the leader of the alumni!

Chartering a new FFA Alumni Affiliate must be accomplished in an organized fashion with set objectives. "How To Organize A Local FFA Alumni Affiliate," in the newly revised FFA ALUMNI MANUAL provides a very good basic outline to follow. There is no one best way for everyone, but the initial planning should not be hurried.

A good nucleus for a steering committee consists of influential leaders from all areas of the community. Do not concentrate only on farmers or past FFA members, but branch out into agribusiness and other key businesses as well as school board members, teachers, local media, retired persons, etc. The broader the representation from various groups that assist in planning, the better the alumni will be as a "tool" for the local department.



By GARY L. MARICLE

*Mr. Maricle is Vice President, American Institute of Cooperation, Woodbridge, Virginia.)*

When planning the first organizational meeting, the steering committee (rather than the instructor) should have everything ready to put in front of the group. This ranges from purposes, tentative constitution and bylaws, eligibility, potential membership, and a tentative calendar for accomplishment. A packet of this information should be handed out to those in attendance to use as a publicity packet.

Promoting the first major membership organizational meeting is crucial. First select a convenient time and place to attract a large audience. Have something planned that people will not want to miss. Follow the necessary steps to legally form the organization. Elect a council and identify activities that can help the Agricultural Education Department/FFA Chapter improve its educational program or activities. **Above all**, ask people to join the organization and pay their dues before leaving the meeting. If the steering committee carries out these steps successfully, a large number of interested persons will be on hand to sign the charter. The organization will be off to a great start and will improve from that point on.

How will all this planning, energy, and time help the Agricultural Education Program/FFA Chapter? The benefits are numerous and measurable. By involving a broad base of community support, the department will grow and flourish. Because of their involvement, the members will have a more clear understanding of the total agricultural program and a personal commitment. This commitment and involvement leads to increased public relations. Increased public relations leads to more understanding and support (or less nonsupport) from persons in the community who are not members of the alumni.

With increased support and understanding, alumni members are willing to assist in the many activities of the school's agricultural program/FFA Chapter. With the alumni assisting, the instructor has more time to concentrate on the new technology and many areas of education which students need in today's highly competitive society

With extra support and assistance, the instructor can accomplish much more. It is important for the instructor

*(Continued on page 18)*

## Is There an FFA Alumni in Your Future?

*(Continued from page 17)*

to provide the highest level of education possible so the alumni can see the difference their involvement makes.

Today there is increased emphasis on the "basics" in education. It furthermore has become increasingly difficult to justify time for agricultural education classes, especially when they involve travel to conferences, contests, shows, etc. It must be proven that "time on task" is not jeopardized by being away from the school. Increased public awareness through the FFA Alumni can result in greater support for activities which build leadership skills in students.

FFA Alumni members must always feel their involvement is needed. A close working relationship with the FFA Chapter is a must. The FFA members should feel free to go to the alumni with needs, ideas and suggestions for assistance. The FFA members' understanding of their relationship with the Alumni is very important to the success and effectiveness of the FFA Alumni.

Without the support and input of the FFA Alumni, East Butler FFA members would not have had the chances for training, leadership, job opportunities, social functions, and awards that they received throughout their high school years. At its height, the East Butler FFA Alumni had 194 members and was named the Top FFA Alumni Affiliate in Nebraska in 1979-1980-1981 and 1982. In 1981 it was named the Top FFA Alumni Affiliate in the nation.

As an offshoot of the FFA Alumni Affiliate at East Butler, a subgroup called the MOFFA (Mothers of FFA) was formed to assist the FFA and the instructor with all kinds of food functions. Each year a sophomore mother was selected to serve a three year term on the FFA Alumni Council. During her third year on the council, she was chairperson of the MOFFA. This group assisted with the FFA Banquet, Spaghetti Supper, Pork BBQ, and many other activities that benefited from a woman's touch. The chairperson also kept a notebook that recorded details underlying many activities. Knowing what had been done in the past made future planning much easier. As an instructor, it was so nice to be able to call one person about planning a banquet meal and then not have to worry about it after that!

A reorganized FFA Alumni Affiliate can revitalize a lagging Agricultural Education department. When going through a reorganization, it is important to examine why the affiliate was not successful the first time around. After the problem has been identified, the same basic plan should be followed as when chartering a new affiliate. However, you should give special attention to those who were members during the first try. Some persons will doubt the need or question how it can be successful when it died the first time. The steering committee should take these kinds of questions into consideration. They should move slowly, but with concise direction so that everyone understands what is happening. If you involve as many of the doubters as you can from the beginning, it will be easier for the affiliate to survive and become successful.

The FFA members should be a major part of the reorganization effort, and parents should be a prime source of alumni members. If students are excited about the alumni, they will frequently encourage their parents to become mem-

bers. If you have 50 FFA members, you should have a potential of 100 FFA Alumni members. This doesn't even consider all those without children in your classes who will want to belong if the steering committee has planned effectively.

An example of a successfully reorganized FFA Alumni Affiliate is the Lakeview FFA Alumni in Columbus, Nebraska. It was reorganized in 1983 and was selected the Top FFA Alumni Affiliate in Nebraska in 1985 and 1986. It received one of five Gold Emblem FFA Alumni Awards presented at the National FFA Alumni Convention in 1986.

Still another possibility for FFA Alumni involvement is at the collegiate level. Some colleges and universities are struggling with a Collegiate FFA Chapter and wondering what to do with these interested students. Why not consider reorganizing the group into FFA Alumni Affiliates? Both University of Nebraska, Lincoln and University of Missouri-Columbia have done this very thing and have been very successful. These collegiate members have been given the chance to sit on the state FFA Alumni Council and provide input from another segment of interested individuals. They can contribute through their collegiate activity involvement. In addition they now have a means of receiving recognition for their efforts, both on the state and national levels. By becoming an FFA Alumni Affiliate, their membership is open to all ages of persons who want to support their college level organization, but were not eligible for Collegiate FFA membership.

In changing from a collegiate chapter to a FFA Alumni Affiliate, the goals and objectives of the present organization must be considered. If they can be met and expanded by becoming an FFA Alumni, then that is one positive point. Care must be taken to ensure that the university activities council will recognize this new group just as it did the previous one. Instead of working with just one FFA Chapter, this group should concentrate on how it can assist the state FFA organization or chapters throughout the state.

A collegiate FFA Alumni Affiliate can really be fun and rewarding. Although membership may be confined to the college years, students may join an FFA Alumni Affiliate in the area where they live, they may try to start one. They could also continue their membership at the collegiate level. Those who continue make good candidates for "Life Members" of the alumni.

In summary, there is no end to the success, types of activities, and enjoyment that can be found in an FFA Alumni Affiliate. The instructor must be sure to look to the alumni for support. Their assistance is very valuable, and he/she should not fear their strength.

Remember, you do not have to try to do everything as the instructor. There are other people and ways to secure assistance. However, it is your responsibility to identify and recruit the resources you need. Your State or National FFA Alumni office can give you helpful information. The decision is yours, and you'd better decide now what you want to do if your program is to continue and grow. If you have an alumni affiliate backing your program, what should you do differently? If you don't have this support, how can you obtain it?

**HAVE YOU STARTED THINKING OF POSSIBLE PERSONS TO SERVE ON YOUR FFA ALUMNI STEERING COMMITTEE YET?**

# Industry Experience To Update Competencies

Ahhhh — the summer break has finally arrived! Now the big question is, "What can I do this summer to strengthen my agricultural program and improve my effectiveness as a teacher?". Top priorities will surely include modifying the curriculum, improving facilities, teaching adults, making SOE visits, working with FFA members at various events, and, lest we forget, taking a vacation. Although the eight weeks of summer may have just disappeared, there is at least one more major summer activity for agricultural teachers — professional improvement and technical update.

As agriculture continues to change, the expertise of those who teach agriculture must be continually strengthened and expanded. The last few years have brought unbelievable changes in agricultural technology. Agricultural teachers must make annual, major revisions in their curricula to keep up with these changes. But in many cases, substantive curriculum change cannot occur without significant improvement and updating of technical knowledge and skills. For example, propagation by tissue culture should be a hands-on activity for students in most secondary and postsecondary agricultural programs. However, many teachers still are not able to adapt this procedure in biotechnology to the sometimes limited facilities in the public schools. The answer: seek out and enroll in inservice programs and experiences offered by businesses and industries in agriculture.

## The VIP Program

Illinois, like most other states, offers a large number of industry-sponsored technical update activities for agricultural teachers. Probably the single most unique and exciting program in our state is the Vocational Instructor Practicum (VIP) Program, initiated by the State Board of Education in 1987. This new legislation provides grants of up to \$2,000 each for teachers or administrators employed in public school vocational education programs who are placed in short-term private or public sector positions for continuing education. This year money has been made available for up to 700 vocational teachers and administrators to be involved in this teacher update program. Teachers who are employed at least 50 percent of their time in vocational education programs are eligible.

The VIP grants are in the amount of \$250 per week up to a total of eight weeks. In cases where the employer benefits from the participation of the teacher or administrator, the employer is expected to contribute at least 30 percent of the grant award.

A relatively large number of Illinois agricultural teachers have participated in the VIP program during the last two summers. Some examples of practicum sites include grain elevators, management firms, research and development



BY ED OSBORNE,

(Dr. Osborne is Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Education, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.)



Troy Paraday (left), agriculture teacher at St. Joseph-Ogden High School in Illinois, works with Bob Wendt, manager of the Champaign County Farm Bureau. During the seven week summer internship as a VIP program participant, Troy developed publicity materials, installed Farm Bureau data systems on site, assisted with legislative and public information activities, and conducted agribusiness and research tours for Farm Bureau members.

sections in seed companies, nurseries, banks, public relations firms, implement dealerships, microcomputer distributors, florists, parks, and others. Teachers usually spend one to four weeks with a single employer, and they often gain experience with several employers during their summer practicum.

Teachers are selected for the VIP program based upon their potential to obtain practical knowledge and skills that will improve their teaching, the relevance of the proposed experience, and the teacher's prior record of participation in professional development activities. The VIP program has created a tremendous boost in technical update interest and opportunity for Illinois vocational educators. The program has several attractive features, including teacher pay, flexible scheduling in the summer months, and the opportunity for individual teachers to shape their personal technical update program. Through the VIP program, teachers have a great opportunity to develop firsthand knowledge and skill in a

(Continued on page 22)

# Lessons From Women In The Agricultural Sciences

Few people can name any women scientists besides Marie Curie, the Polish-French chemist and physicist. That inability should come as no surprise, for women in the laboratory have been scarce. Further, long-held beliefs about the scientific life have shaped a male-dominated profession. An examination of the lives and careers of these women scientists clearly reveals that they can "do great science." In particular, women in the agricultural sciences have made significant contributions. Their stories tell of challenge and conflict but also of contribution and success.

## Diverse Interests

Just a few examples can show the diverse interest of women in the agricultural sciences. Elizabeth Pickney (1722-1793), a South Carolina agronomist, perfected a method for cultivating and extracting indigo. Jane Colden (1724-1766) catalogued more than 300 plant specimens. Harriet Williams Russell Strong (1844-1929) gained national recognition at the 1893 World's Columbia Exhibition in Chicago for her exhibits on water storage and pampas grass. Anna Botsford Comstock (1854-1930) made important contributions to the teaching of nature studies and worked to strengthen the interest of rural children in the agricultural sciences. Beatrix Potter (1866-1943) is best known as the creator of Peter Rabbit, but she was also the first person in England to discover that the colorful patches on trees were a merger of two plants — fungi and algae. Microbiologist Alice Catherine Evans (1881-1975) is noted for her discovery linking a cattle disease, brucellosis, to human undulant fever.

## Significant Contributions

Details about the lives and work of Elizabeth Pickney, Jane Colden, Harriet Williams Russell Strong, and Anna Botsford Comstock illustrate the significance of contributions made by women in the agricultural sciences. Elizabeth Pickney's perseverance made her experiments in growing indigo successful. Because of her father's military commitments, Pickney took over management of three plantations. About her early experiments with crops, Pickney said, "I was ignorant both of the proper season for sowing it (indigo) and the soil best adapted to it." However, through continued experimentation, Pickney perfected the method of cultivating indigo.

Jane Colden was recognized as America's best-known women scientist for nearly a century. Colden's fame as a botanist resulted from her father's encouragement. For her benefit, Colden's father wrote an "Explication on the Principles of Botany," which included a translation of portions of Linnaeus and all the commonly used botanical Latin. Because of this document, Colden became proficient at describing plants in English. By age 33, Colden had compiled a detailed catalogue of over 300 local plants. American naturalist Alexander Garden considered Colden's work "extremely accurate." Colden's English description of



BY JENNETTE REA, JANET L. HENDERSON,  
AND BARBARA E. COOPER

(Ms. Rea is Graduate Research Assistant; Dr. Henderson is Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University. Dr. Cooper is formerly associated with Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University.)

the gardenia, which she named after Garden, was published in the *Edinburgh Essays and Observations*.

Harriet Williams Russell Strong was noted for her experiments with pampas grass, walnuts, irrigation, flood control, and water storage. On 220 acres of semi-arid southern California land, Strong planted walnuts, citrus fruits, pomegranates, and pampas. To make these experiments pay, Strong studied marketing problems in addition to irrigation and flood control. In 1887 and 1894, Strong patented designs for a sequence of water storage dams.

Anna Botsford Comstock was named one of the 12 greatest women in America in a 1923 poll conducted by the League of Women Voters. An article in *Nature Magazine* said that Anna Comstock has "inspired probably more men and women of courage and intellect to pioneer in a new field than any other person." Comstock's most lasting contribution was to the teaching of nature studies. She prepared leaflets for classroom use, lectured before teachers' institutes, and worked to influence educational policies regarding nature study. She wrote several books designed to fill the needs of the teacher and student untrained in nature study. These books included *How to Keep Bees* (1905); *Trees at Leisure* (1916); and her first major work, *The Handbook of Nature Study* (1911). In addition, Comstock was the first woman to attain professional status at Cornell University.

## Challenges and Conflicts

These stories of scientific contributions also include challenge and conflict. Most often, the conflict involves the unacceptance of women working in the sciences. Brief biographies of Alice Catherine Evans, Edith Marion Patch (1876-1954), and Beatrix Potter illustrate this conflict. Alice Evans faced challenges as a pioneer woman scientist in the



early 20th century. Her investigations of the bacteriology of milk aroused opposition from the dairy industry and rejection from her colleagues, who were apprehensive about accepting the findings of a woman. Despite these challenges, Evans continued her research and was determined to persuade the scientific community of the validity of her work. Her efforts paid off. In 1928, the Society of American Bacteriologists recognized Evans' accomplishments by selecting her as the first woman president of the organization. Also, she was a U. S. delegate to the first and second International Congress of Microbiology in 1930 and 1936.

Edith Patch applied for jobs with several agricultural experiment stations in 1901. However, she received no job offers because many experiment station directors viewed the field of entomology as "unwomanly." Finally, in 1903, the Maine Agricultural Experiment Station offered Patch a position as a volunteer assigned to organize a department of entomology. Patch's acceptance of the position and her determination convinced the director of the Experiment Station that her intentions of being an entomologist were worthy. As a result, she was given a regular salary and spent 34 years at the University. Patch was the second women faculty member at the University of Maine.

Few people know that Beatrix Potter was a botanist. Although she was encouraged by her uncle, a chemist, to pursue scientific study, her efforts to share her research were frustrating. For example, when she attempted to present her work to the director of the Royal Botanical Gardens, he belittled her studies. The director felt her drawings were "too artistic to be scientific." When Potter's paper was presented to the Linnean Society of London in 1897, it was read by a male assistant because women were not permitted in the Society. Her studies, along with other papers, were destroyed after her death (Shacher, 1976).

Despite the challenging situations faced by women in the agricultural sciences, these women made lasting contributions. Their contributions range from testing agronomic methods to studying water storage problems to theorizing about the relationship between fungi and algae. With determination and perseverance, women like Alice Evans, Edith Patch, and many others have broken down educational and professional barriers. The lives of women scientists have much to teach us.

In today's society, young people typically believe that agriculture consists solely of farming and ranching. The food

and agricultural sciences offer a future of rapidly expanding career opportunities. The U.S. Department of Agriculture predicts that through the year 1990 the food and natural resource system of the nation will need more than 48,000 new college graduates each year (Coulter, Stanton, & Goecker, 1985). Approximately one-fourth to one-third of the job openings will be for food and agricultural scientists, engineers, and technologists. At present the United States is facing a serious shortage of highly qualified food and agricultural scientists. Women agricultural scientists at the 70 U.S. Land-grant universities comprise 5% of the total agricultural faculty (Henderson & Cooper, 1987). Young women enrolled in colleges of agriculture today need to read and hear more about the challenges and successes of women in agricultural sciences. From these histories, young women can find role models who made significant contributions despite great obstacles — role models who met the scientific challenge.

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## Expanding The Horizons

(Continued from page 3)

experiential education and narrow the concept to a livestock project lack the vision required to develop new programs just as surely as those who would eliminate it from all agricultural education programs.

In summary, if and when the concept of an expanded horizon for agricultural education is to be realized several things must happen. The profession must perceive it as a desired goal, we must stop "tripping over" or "hiding behind" terminology, and avoid getting hung up on tradition. Finally, we must be willing to change and take the risk of living up to our potential greatness!

## Industry Experience to Update Competencies

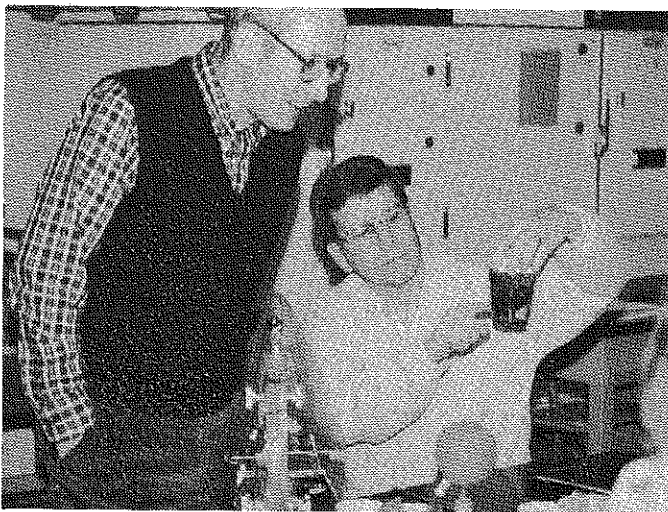
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new area of agriculture. Furthermore, this program also enables teachers to devote a substantial period of time to developing and/or improving their expertise in one or two highly focused areas.

Of course, the VIP program would not be possible without the interest and support of agricultural business and industry representatives. Teachers have been extremely pleased with the amount learned and the instruction received during their practicum experiences. Several universities also offer credit courses for VIP program participants. While the employers certainly stand to benefit from a public relations standpoint, teachers gain far more as they develop greater confidence and expertise in selected areas of agriculture. No matter how it is evaluated, the VIP program in Illinois has developed into one of the best teacher improvement/technical update programs in the country.

### Other Business And Industry Support

Again, as in most other states, agricultural businesses and industries in Illinois provide a host of other technical update activities for teachers during the summer months. Tours are often scheduled as a part of summer meetings of various agricultural organizations, agencies, and teacher groups. If teachers approach these opportunities with the intent to acquire all they can to help them in their teaching, then tours of this type can be very worthwhile. Of course, technical update workshops are always included in the June teachers conference, and several sessions are usually taught by business and industry representatives. Some states hold a separate technical update conference, and involvement from agricultural business and industry can be even greater in these special workshops.



Leroy Shoemaker (left) and Larry Lowe participate in a summer update program in agriscience. A large number of technical update programs sponsored by agribusiness and industry are available on local, regional, and national levels.

At the University of Illinois we have offered a number of professional and technical skill improvement workshops during the summer session. These credit-generating courses

have relied on both university faculty and business and industry personnel to provide technical information and skill development activities. If given plenty of notice, most agricultural businesses are eager to provide technical update programs for teachers. For example, we once had a class of teachers visit the corporate headquarters of a grain merchandising company in Chicago. The division heads in the company spent over three hours with us sharing the ins and outs of the company. That visit provided a unique perspective of the big business side of agricultural marketing and product development.



Larry Pfeiffer participated in the VIP program in 1987, gaining experience in an agricultural management firm and a horticultural crop production business. Teachers can initiate individual technical update experiences in agribusiness and industry, which will allow them to tailor the focus and depth of the experiences around their own needs and interest.

The NVATA Professional Improvement Workshops scheduled at various times throughout the summer also represent a tremendous industry effort to keep agricultural teachers well-versed in the new technologies. From new production techniques to marketing to biotechnology developments, these workshops contain something for every agricultural teacher. In most cases NVATA reimburses participants for nearly all expenses incurred in the workshops, which are held nationwide. Most of these workshops last two or three days and provide the latest industry methods in specialized fields.

### Future Possibilities

Predicting the future is guesswork at best, but several ideas seem to hold excellent promise for effective technical update. There is no doubt that the technology needed to provide innovative technical update for teachers will be developed, if it is not already available. The real question is whether sufficient financial resources, creativity, and initiative will be provided to make these ideas become a reality. How many years will it be before these industry supported technical update programs become commonplace?

- Credit and noncredit courses team taught at the business or industry site by the private and public sector
- Courses and workshops taught on a state, regional or national basis using videoconferencing techniques, originating from public and private sector sites

*(Continued on page 23)*

## FFA Alumni: An Educational Tool at Local and State Levels

*(Continued from page 16)*

help you do), so it is readily available for your use. Information from each individual should be carefully collected. If a new program is introduced, knowing your members' backgrounds could be very useful in determining who has expertise in a certain area.



Providing unique placement opportunities is a real boost to a local agriculture program. Alumni members may be able to develop placement programs for students with career interests outside the traditional agriculture industry.

## Statewide Assistance

Many states are experiencing staff cutbacks and expanded responsibilities in vocational education. There is also an increased call for cooperation with business and industry in the development of statewide efforts. Having an excellent State FFA Alumni can make the difference between success and failure or sanity and insanity for state staff.

The efforts of my state staff predecessors in Wisconsin, in helping to establish an outstanding FFA Alumni, have been appreciated by this writer. Most recently, our State FFA Alumni took on the task of organizing a State Leadership Council for Agricultural Education. This was a very long process. It took about two years to complete, but it would have taken the two state staff five to ten years which would have meant the curtailment of other responsibilities. Also, since the FFA Alumni is an organization outside the state department, they have more latitude and offer a significantly less restricted budget. This leadership council has proven invaluable in helping to provide direction, leadership and support for curriculum direction, resource development, and program and professional development. It promises to become much more integrated in the future.

In conclusion, I personally know you cannot, by yourself, as a teacher or state staff person (individually or as a small group), be as effective in delivering agricultural education to students without the support of an FFA Alumni, as you can be with one!!! I hope you will think this over carefully, then put aside your excuses for not utilizing the FFA Alumni to its full potential, and **JUST DO IT!!!** You will never be sorry that you did!!!

## Industry Experience to Update Competencies

*(Continued from page 22)*

- A technical information national hotline, available seven days per week to provide information on all specialized areas of agriculture
- State and local funds provided for salaries and expenses of teachers who participate in up to two week long technical update sessions
- A computer network of teachers and "experts" to provide ready response to all technical inquiries
- Technical update in agriculture provided through cable television programs for teachers
- Industry involvement in planning and developing land laboratory opportunities at schools
- Specified business and industry sponsors in each state who serve as a long term information and education base for teachers

The technical updating of teachers must become more convenient and less routine. The need for continuous updating is more obvious than ever before, and when teachers fail to take advantage of inservice opportunities, they risk the health and vitality of their program. The summer months provide the greatest opportunity for intensified technical update activities through practicums, workshops, conferences, course work, and so on. We must turn to agricultural business and industry for assistance in teacher update efforts because (1) they are interested and (2) they have the expertise. This is not to say that universities cannot also play a significant role in teacher inservice programs. Clearly there are many inservice opportunities in agriculture provided by both the public and private sectors during the summer months. Becoming involved in these programs can help teachers teach the "new agriculture" with more confidence, expertise, and success. So, what will you do this summer in the way of technical update to strengthen your agricultural program and improve your effectiveness as a teacher?



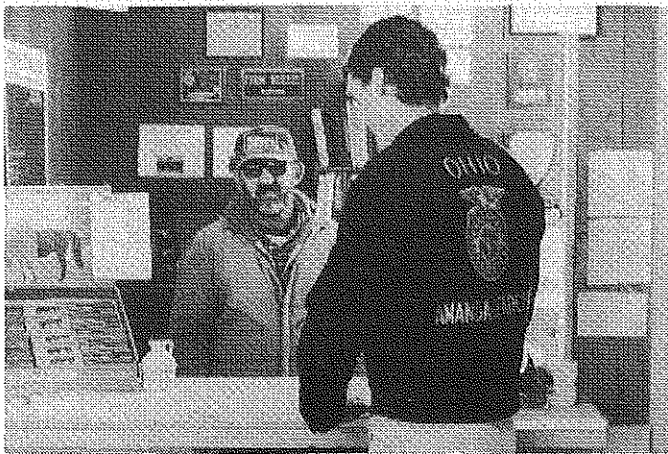
# Stories in Pictures



A toy tractor and equipment were auctioned by the FFA Alumni at the National FFA Convention in 1988.



Mr. Josiah Phelps, Vice President, National FFA Alumni Association, calls in a bid during the National Convention auction which raised \$26,000 in 1988.



Local agribusinessmen also serve as Alumni members and support as well as promote a better understanding of the FFA and agricultural education programs.



Alumni purchased a van and serve as chaperones and drivers for educational events. A group of members prepared to go on a soils and land judging activity.