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The Agricultural **EDUCATION**

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What do *you* say to students
considering a career in
Agricultural Education?

Passing the Torch--Whose Job Is It?

By Billye Foster

Passing the torch. *Whose job is that?* Did you ever read the story called "Whose Job Is It?" It goes something like this...

This is a story about four people named: **Everybody**, **Somebody**, **Anybody** and **Nobody**. There was an important job to be done and **Everybody** was asked to do it. **Everybody** was sure **Somebody** would do it. **Anybody** could have done it, but **Nobody** did it. **Somebody** got angry about that, because it was **Everybody's** job.

Everybody thought **Anybody** could do it, but **Nobody** realized that **Everybody** wouldn't do it. It ended up that **Everybody** blamed **Somebody** when **Nobody** did what **Anybody** could have done.

I often think we all suffer from a case of the "Anybodies." It is easy for people at the university to say, "Let the teachers do it--it is their job." And it is equally easy for teachers in the field to say, "Let the university folks recruit--they are the ones that prepare teachers anyway." Even state supervisors and FFA representatives get in on the act. It is easier to say, "I have other responsibilities," or, "We did the publicity," than to deal with the issue in an ongoing way. In truth, it is all of our responsibility. Each of us has the ability to help guide young people interested in the profession in the right direction. The question

is, *do we step up to the plate?*

For me it is like this magazine. Do you realize that The Agricultural Education Magazine is a living record of the Agricultural Education profession? I say *living* because it serves as an ongoing diary of sorts. Since 1929 it has diligently maintained record of the challenges, issues and achievements of this profession. More importantly, this information is not recorded in sterile research terminology, but rather in the words of those who have lived the profession. You would think anything that important would have no shortage of people wanting to contribute--right? Sadly, it often becomes a case of the "Anybodies."



Actively encouraging the next generation of agricultural educators is something like taking time to post an entry in a diary or journal (or writing an article for this magazine). No one would disagree that this is a good idea--it is just one of those things someone else could do better. The reality is that just as each student is unique, so are their needs when it comes to educational and career advice. The student who comes to you as their trusted teacher and friend, would not receive the same message in the same way if delivered by another. They need to hear it from *your* lips!

Think about the phrase "Passing the Torch." *What does it mean?*

Throughout history torches have been used as a means of lighting. When I think of this phrase, I envision torches that light the way, making the path less confusing and more welcoming. As men and women who have chosen Agricultural Education as our profession, we have also inherited the responsibility to keep it alive and well for future generations. This means "passing the torch" becomes something of a group activity! When we all contribute, the work goes faster and usually has a more productive outcome.

As you read the insightful articles in this issue, ask yourself what great ideas can you glean from those who made time to share their ideas and experiences. I think you will take more than one great idea away from this issue. Together we can continue the tradition of a unique profession--a profession that seeks to guide future generations on their path through life!



Billye Foster is an Associate Professor at The University of Arizona and is Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine.

Theme: Passing the Torch-- *What do you say to students con- sidering a career in Agricultural Education?*

Editorial:

Passing the Torch--*Whose Job Is It?*.....2
By Billye Foster, Editor

Theme Editor Comments:

What do we say to a student considering a career in
Agricultural Education?4
By John Rayfield

Theme Articles:

Wisdom for the New Generation.....6
By Scott Burriss & Rudy Ritz

What Message Are You Sending?.....8
By Amy Smith & Joshua Day

Why Teach Agriculture?? It Beats Working!.....11
By Gary Moore

Recruiting Agriculture Teachers: *Are We Our Own Worst Enemy?*.....13
By Chip Bridges

The Agricultural Education Life.....18
By John Ricketts

Few Words, Big Meaning.....20
By Dwayne Pavelock & Doug Ullrich

The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love.....23
By John Dimick

Passing the Torch25
By Al DeRose

Informational Items:

May/June 2008 Theme Editor Contacts.....5

Inclusion Corner (Guest Writer)16
By Jaqui Deeds

Tabulating Career Development Events:
A Contest Management Approach.....26
By Mike Spiess

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Article Submission

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Editor

Dr. Billye Foster, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Education, The University of Arizona, PO Box 210036--Forbes 228, 1140 East South Campus Drive, Tucson, Arizona, Phone (520) 621-1523, FAX: (520) 621-9889.

E-mail: billye@ag.arizona.edu

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What do we say to students considering a career in Agricultural Education?

by John Rayfield

When Billye Foster contacted me about being theme editor for this edition of the *Agricultural Education Magazine*, I was a little nervous about saying yes. Once Billye told me about the theme this issue would be addressing, I thought this will be easy and loads of fun! I consulted my colleagues here at NC State and my friends and mentors at Texas Tech (where I attended graduate school) to start assembling theme articles from a wide array of agricultural educators.

This issue of the magazine includes viewpoints from current agricultural education teachers, two retired agricultural education teachers with nearly 70 years of teaching experience between them, an

agricultural education state staff member, a few university agricultural educators, and graduate (former ag teachers) and undergraduate students in agricultural education. The authors stretch from coast to coast and offer their own unique perspective on how we all have a responsibility in passing the torch to future generations of agricultural educators.

Each of us involved in agricultural education realizes that we must do our part to recruit and retain quality individuals in our profession. The 10 X 15 initiative is on everyone's mind, but we still must address the critical need for agricultural education teachers in our country today. The torch must be passed in all phases of agricultural education. Secondary teachers must seek out students interested in a rewarding teaching career and encourage them to pursue that goal. State staff members should

encourage recruitment practices and work with secondary teachers and university faculty to get these students enrolled in post-secondary programs. University faculty should reach out into the local communities and continue to utilize the local agricultural education teacher as one of their primary recruiters.

When I reflect on my career in agricultural education, I can remember many instances where the torch was passed to me. Early in my career, the current president of the Georgia Agricultural Teachers Association, the distinguished Dr. David Burton told me, "You're not bad for a rookie." I took this as a compliment and later realized that veteran teachers do not readily hand out praise to the "rookies." This was his way of passing the torch to me. As a profession, we often times fail to recognize the hard work and determination of



Who will lift the torch and lead us to a bright tomorrow?

young professionals who need our encouragement to stay in the trenches.

Dr. Steve Frazee, my major professor at Texas Tech, told me that as teacher educators, "We are the bridge between education and career." As students cross that bridge, we should welcome them and offer the support and guidance needed to help them be successful. Teacher educators and state agricultural education staff play a key role in sustaining the burning torch. Without their support many of these new professionals will struggle to survive in their first few years of teaching.

As you read these articles, I challenge you to think about how you have passed the torch to our next generation of agricultural educators. Are you doing your part to recruit and retain agricultural education teachers? Let's not be our own worst enemy in this battle--let's work together to keep the torch burning bright for our profession.



John Rayfield is an assistant professor in the Agricultural and Extension Education Department at North Carolina State University.

May/June 2008

Theme Editor:

Robert Torres

TorresR@missouri.edu

Associate Professor & Director of
Undergraduate Studies
Department of Agricultural Education
University of Missouri
126 Gentry Hall
Columbia, MO 65211

“Problem Solving or Appreciative Inquiry— Which is best?”

Problem solving is the process of moving toward a goal when the path to that goal is uncertain (Michael Martinez). John Dewey developed a sequence of steps that are referred to as the problem-solving sequence.

Appreciative Inquiry is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. (David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney). Appreciative Inquiry has been referred to as the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential.

Pricing Updates

The Agricultural Education Magazine

Prices are changing!

When: July 2008 -- Volume 81, Issue 1

We told you prices were changing, BUT we forgot to tell you when! The new price structure will take effect in July 2008 with the first issue of the 81st Volume of The Agricultural Education Magazine. The increased rates will catch up to the rising cost of publication and aid in the creation of an online archive available through the magazine's web site.

Thank you for your ongoing support of this piece of Agricultural Education history!

The 2008 Managing & Editing Board

Wisdom for the New Generation

By

Scott Burriss and Rudy Ritz

The student teaching experience is an exciting time. That excitement gives way to responsibility as one assumes the role of an agricultural educator. In fact, some have said the real learning actually begins when the job begins. The induction period of any instructor in the secondary classroom includes its challenges. In addition to the obvious challenges, such as establishing discipline, meeting the community, identifying needs, etc., there are challenges that relate more to the culture of the job rather than the execution of the job.

Teacher education programs across the country prepare young people to enter the agricultural education classroom. No doubt, they have done a wonderful job laying a strong foundation that will enable our newest teachers to have a meaningful and lasting impact on their students and on our profession. There will also be some bumps in the road. While experience is the best teacher, maybe some of the bumps previously encountered will help our new teachers to choose an easier path to navigate.

These bits of advice that follow are a product of a combined twenty-four years of secondary teaching experience spread over five different programs from rural to urban. The following list collectively represents those things we believe to be important for our next generation of new teachers.

1. Teach class first.

2. Quality – not quantity.
3. Priorities.
4. Keep things in order.
5. Join the network.
6. Break the mold.
7. Set the bar high.

Teach Class First!

This point is one involving the entire roster of students in one's class. It was very easy to be engulfed by the pressure to compete in numerous FFA activities as I began teaching. The first good advice I heard from a fellow ag teacher was to never forget the 15 or 20 (or 30) students who were left behind at school when working with an LDE, CDE or a livestock team.

“You were hired to be a teacher to every student in your classroom first. The teams you train and livestock shows are an extra duty.”

Even though my formal education was complete, this statement, heard during a casual and impromptu mentoring session developed into an integral part of my educational philosophy. I began to realize I still had a lot to learn and very likely would never quit learning. The FFA and intra-curricular activities are vital to a successful program. They are an effective teaching tool and should not be abandoned. However, we should not abandon our efforts to teach every student who walks through our classroom door every day. Steve Frazee, Ph. D., of Texas Tech University said to my student

teaching block in 1993, “A teacher's job is to help students learn. That is the service that we are paid to provide.”

Quality – Not Quantity!

A high quality teacher and a high quality program supersede quantity. In other words, don't spread yourself too thin. Two LDE teams that are well trained are far more desirable than six teams that are poorly trained. Community needs for a good program will vary from school to school. So it is up to the individual instructor to develop the needs for each program. There is not a kit or mold one can use based on another program or group of programs. Don't observe another program arriving in the parking lot of a contest location and measure their quality on the number of students in a yellow bus. A teacher needs to do what is best for his/her school and meet the expectations of each individual administrator. Trying to have numbers will possibly lead to many hours of work resulting in less quality. In addition, teachers are human and need time to re-fuel on a daily basis. Teaching can be rewarding, but too much of anything leads to burnout. The result is losing high quality teachers.

Priorities!

Good time management and setting one's priorities go hand in hand. With maturity comes a busy schedule at personal and professional levels simultaneously. It is crucial to remember that family, faith, and health should always be on one's highest list of priorities. Work



Photo courtesy of the University of Arizona

should always be number four. Happiness is made at home with your loved ones. If you're happy at home, then you'll be happier at work. Although this paragraph is the shortest in text-length, it is definitely the most important.

Keep things in order!

One of the most alluring aspects of secondary programs is the abundant opportunities for competition and recognition. Just as it was a great sense of pride to be recognized for outstanding participation as a student, it is equally memorable to a teacher to see the hard work of his/her students recognized with a trophy or honor. In fact, many students have been motivated by the opportunity to outperform their colleagues or have grown from the confidence and esteem associated with a special recognition. These are wonderful tools available to a teacher and should be used in all programs. After all, these award programs and competitive events were designed to allow students to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge and development of skills. They also

come with a caution – keep things in proper order. Don't be tempted, as a young teacher, to focus so much on the award or the competition that the proper devotion is not given to student learning and development. Only when we get competing and winning out of order do we get into trouble. Start with a strong foundation of education and experiences.

Join the network!

A popular cellular commercial talks about the value in having a network. They portray a "network" as a tremendous group of people with any imaginable resource all ready to move in an instant. Our Agricultural Education network is not so different, albeit not so well advertised. For some reason, many young teachers feel they need to prove themselves or feel like they are isolated. The truth is that this group is a family. One needs look no further than an annual conference to see the camaraderie. It is most evident in those unfortunate times of tragedy when colleagues are called upon for help. But in the daily grind, we

forget we all share a similar mission and are all working to accomplish the same goals. Experienced teachers are always willing to share advice, offer support, brainstorm solutions or just simply listen. One of the most beneficial things a young teacher can do is surround him or herself with a network of support.

Break the mold!

In working with future agricultural educators at the college level, I have made the following observations. If you ask students why they chose agricultural education, most of them will attribute that decision to their own personal school experiences. In the vast majority of cases, there is an influential advisor or strong and active chapter involved. However, much has or will change between the time you leave the secondary classroom and the time you return to the classroom as a teacher. Our agricultural programs are changing as well. New teachers will have to find creative solutions to the challenges that arise. The traditional ways may not be the best way to accomplish our goals. Don't be afraid to be innovative.

Set the bar high!

In teacher preparation programs around the country, teacher educators are preaching the concepts important to teaching and learning. One of my favorite concepts is, "students will rise to the expectations of the teacher." If you ask a group of 15-year-olds what they want to do in your class today, chances are they would respond with "NOTHING!" No one really appreciates a waste of time. If you challenge your students to learn and perform at a high level, they will. If you create an environment where students need to work hard and be productive, before long you will be surrounded by productive and hard-working students.

As a new teacher, I don't recall anyone handing me the torch. Maybe that is because my focus

Continued on page 9

What Message are You Sending?

by Amy Smith & Joshua Day

At this moment, a little girl somewhere in the United States watches her mom in the kitchen and tries to act just like her. Somewhere else, a little boy sits on the couch with his daddy and observes his reaction to the latest football score. The little boy imitates the same emotion expressed from the other end of the couch. When children look to their parents or other adults and say... "I want to be just like you when I grow up," often we feel flattered, smile and pat them on the head. However, what happens when these children grow a little older and say, "I want to be an ag teacher just like you when I grow up?" Do we still feel flattered, smile and give them a pat on the head? Or, do we quickly run down the laundry list of reasons why teaching agriculture is NOT the greatest job in the world? What message do we send our children, either our own or those who sit in our classes day after day, about our job?

Without a doubt, many of our high school

students probably spend more time with us than their own parents. Because of this, we have an incredible opportunity to be successful role models for them. Generally, we do a pretty darn good job of it... in my opinion. Why then is there an exception made for the way we portray our career choice? It's true; our job is demanding, at times thankless, and requires a tremendous investment of our personal time. However, it is also true that we chose this career – and most days, we wouldn't have it any other way! If that is the case, why do our actions seem to say, "Do as I say, not as I do?"

Think about that phrase with regard

to Agricultural Education: "*Do as I say, not as I do.*" Is that really the message that we want to be sending to the students enrolled in our secondary agriculture courses? Often it seems that individuals involved in challenging, labor intensive careers such as agriculture encourage their children to pursue livelihoods in anything but agriculture. Many times, we also hear of teachers pushing their children to enter higher paying, more prestigious careers. If your own children, or the students in your classes, were to consider becoming agricultural educators... what would you say? More importantly, perhaps, what would your *actions* say?

As you know, there is an ever-increasing demand for highly qualified agricultural educators across the nation. With The Council's 10,000 X 2015 initiative, coupled with teacher shortages and teacher attrition rates, the recruitment of potential agriculture educators should be on all of our minds. Indeed, we have the potential to be the best spokespersons for the job. The question is: how are we doing? The answer is... only you can know that. However, there are some efforts we can all make individually to ensure that the message we are sending (both through our words *and* actions)



Photo courtesy of the University of Arizona



is the one we should be sending.

1. Be positive! Shine a light on what is right. All too often, we get wrapped up in the latest dilemma we are facing, whether it be the most recent note from a parent, or a new requirement (aka: hoop to jump through) implemented by a school administration or legislator. However... even when these negative, frustrating things are occupying our time and thoughts, there are countless positive things going on as well. Sometimes, we just fail to see them because of the way we are looking at things. Think about how this may affect those students considering a career in agricultural education. If all our students ever hear about are the long hours we put in and the thankless job we do, how likely are they to want to follow in our footsteps? On the other hand, if we make a conscious effort to share the highlights of the job with our students too, we'll give them a fairer, less biased view of the career.



2. Be realistic. Not everyone is cut out for the life of an agricultural educator. In fact, we would do greater injustice to the profession if we encourage all our students to pursue ag teaching as a career. The last thing we need in agricultural education are beginning teachers who are unprepared or have misconceptions about the career. We need to make every effort to be honest with ourselves and our students about the time demands and importance of the occupation. We need classrooms across the country filled with highly qualified, enthusiastic teachers who have a passion for educating others--not classrooms filled with teachers excited about the "summers off," the opportunity to coach, or the chance to re-live their stock showing days. Watch for students who seem to have a knack for teaching others and leading by example, and let them know it! Those are the ones we want teaching future generations! Sometimes these students won't even realize their own potential. Push them, mentor them and give them opportunities to develop the qualities of an effective teacher.

3. Be active! Do not sit back and think that others will do this or that it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to recruit future agricultural educators. While this is true, in part, the best sales pitch for agricultural education will come from those of us in the front line. Don't hesitate to tell your story; students want to know how you arrived in the

was on the immediate task at hand and it was difficult to see the big picture. As new teachers embark on a career in agricultural education, perhaps the lessons learned by others who have traveled that path may be of some value. To our new teachers, in addition to kind words of wisdom and advice, also accept our appreciation for taking up a challenge that has been so important to those who have taught before you. **GOOD LUCK!**



Scott Burris is an assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications at Texas Tech University.



Rudy Ritz is a High School Agricultural Science Teacher at Monterey High School in Lubbock, Texas. He is currently working on his doctoral degree at Texas Tech University in Agricultural Education.

classroom and why you chose agricultural education. Few agricultural education majors in college wind up in the degree program by mistake. A large proportion of the students choose agricultural education because of their own experiences in ag education and FFA. Do you provide information about a career in agricultural education to your upperclassmen? Have you utilized any "Teach Ag Ed" information from National FFA? When you teach careers to young students, do you emphasize the great aspects of your job?

The future lies in your classroom. If you make a conscious effort to be a **positive, realistic** and **active** role model for your students, it is quite likely that more and more of them will explore agricultural education as a potential career. In fact, if each and every agricultural educator

would simply nudge one student in the direction of agricultural education, I would bet our shortage would be over. With that in mind, what more can *you* do to promote the career to *your* students? ***What message will you choose to send?***



Amy R. Smith is a doctoral candidate in Agricultural Education at the University of Missouri. Prior to entering graduate school, she taught high school agriculture in both Oklahoma and Iowa.



Joshua S. Day is an undergraduate student at Iowa State University majoring in Agricultural Education. He is a former student of Mrs. Smith.

Ag Teacher's Creed

I am an agricultural educator by choice and not by chance.

I believe in American agriculture; I dedicate my life to its development and the advancement of its people.

I will strive to set before my students by my deeds and actions the highest standards of citizenship for the community, state and nation.

I will endeavor to develop professionally through study, travel and exploration.

I will not knowingly wrong my fellow teachers. I will defend them as far as honesty will permit.

I will work for the advancement of agricultural education and I will defend it in my community, state and nation.

I realize that I am a part of the public school system. I will work in harmony with school authorities and other teachers of the school.

My love for youth will spur me on to impart something from my life that will help make for each of my students a full and happy future.

by Gary Moore

Why Teach Agriculture? It Beats Working!

As a teenager, I worked for neighboring ranchers and farmers in Central Texas. I hauled rocks out of fields, poisoned mesquite trees, worked livestock, and sewed sacks of grain on a tractor pulled combine. But the worst job of all was harvesting broomcorn. It would make many of the jobs featured on the Discovery Channel's *Dirty Jobs* seem like child's play.

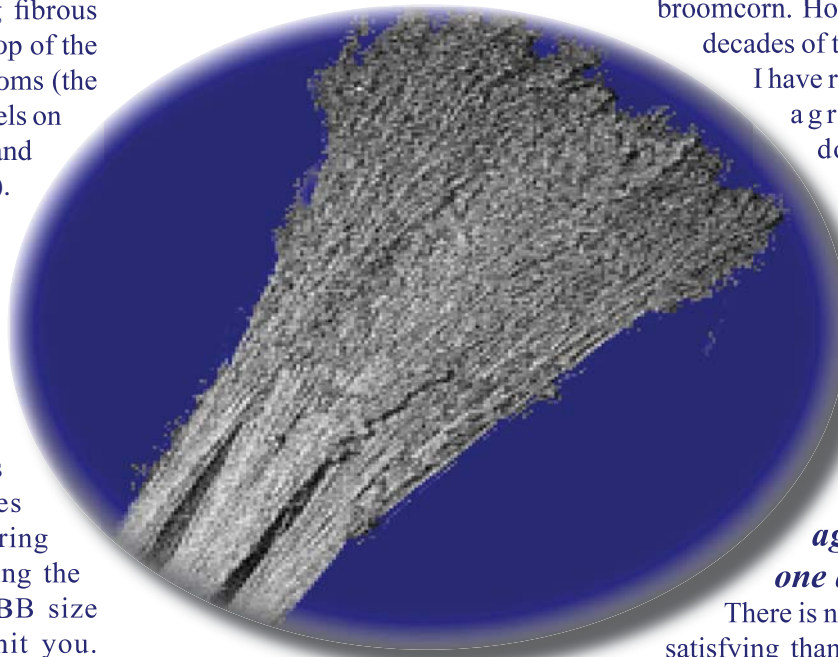
Even though broomcorn looks like a corn plant and grows as tall as corn (if not taller), it is really a type of sorghum (*Sorghum vulgare* var. *technicum*). The long fibrous bundle of panicles on the top of the plant are used to make brooms (the panicles are sort of like tassels on a corn plant but are wiry and stiff with a big seed head). Harvesting these panicles is hard work. One reaches up, often on tiptoes, then grabs the panicles in one hand, and gives a quick jerk downward to snap the panicles off the plant. Of course the itchy, seed heads at the top of the panicles shatter and come showering down on the person pulling the broomcorn. The flying BB size seeds sting when they hit you.

It is typically the hottest time of summer when the broomcorn is harvested so that the seed heads stick to the sweaty workers. This then itches. To minimize the itch, I wore long sleeve shirts and buttoned the top button, which made me hotter and sweatier. One doesn't have to work long to get a back ache from

stretching up to pull the broom corn.

When you get a handful of broomcorn, you bend two plants over and lay your harvested bundle of broom corn straws on these plants. You don't want to lay them flat on the ground because when you come back later with the wagon to load up the broom corn bundles, copperhead snakes would be laying under them to get out of the heat. Of course the wiry straws of the broom corn soon make one's hands tender, blistered and cut.

If this wasn't bad enough, you



came back later, tied the broomcorn into bundles and loaded them on a wagon. Then you would take the broomcorn to a tin shed where the bundles are stacked for curing. Working in the top of an enclosed tin shed in 100 degree weather is not fun either. In a few weeks when the threshing and bundling machinery came to

the farm, you had to unload the broomcorn out of the shed so that the remaining seed heads could be removed and the straws bundled. So harvesting broomcorn is the worst job I had while growing up.

The reason I make a big deal of this is that when I went to college to study to be an agriculture teacher, one of my professors kept stating that teaching agriculture beat working. And I would think back to harvesting broomcorn and would have to agree with him. As a matter of fact, anything would beat harvesting broomcorn. However, after several decades of teaching agriculture, I have realized that teaching agriculture really does beat working.

**How Does
Teaching
Agriculture
Beat
Working?**

*Teaching
agriculture gives
one a warm feeling.*

There is not much in life more satisfying than having a group of hard working students in the shop on a cold winter morning. The buzz of the welder and the smile on a student's face who is learning to run a bead just makes one feel good inside. Likewise, transplanting tomato seedlings in the greenhouse on an early spring morning is equally fulfilling. Or for that matter, nearly any teaching activity in

Continued from page 11

the agricultural complex is just as satisfying. It might be teaching a group of new students about the FFA. When you are working with a group of students and see the excitement that you are creating, it just seems that everything is right with the world!

Most American's can't report that their jobs make them feel good. They don't want to go to work in the morning. MSNBC.com reports that Americans hate their jobs more than ever before in the past 20 years, with fewer than half saying they are satisfied. Forbes.com cites surveys that have found that 87% of Americans don't like their jobs. As an agriculture teacher I love going to work and working with students. It just makes me feel warm inside.

Teaching agriculture provides for variety.

One of the things I enjoy about teaching agriculture is the variety that is available. I can choose to work in the classroom, or go to the shop, or work in the greenhouse, or go to the land laboratory, or etc., etc. Most teachers and most workers have no control over their daily work environment. Agriculture teachers do. We are not confined to a small 4 x 4 cubicle.

Teaching agriculture allows one to maintain ties to agriculture.

The 172 acres I grew up on in Central Texas is not enough to support me, let alone a family. Yet, I have a love of agriculture. By teaching agriculture, I get to work in an industry I love. Thomas Jefferson stated, "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most

independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands." By being an agriculture teacher, I can belong to the group that Jefferson describes.

Teaching agriculture is like belonging to an extended family.

As I travel across the state of North Carolina, I know that if I had a car problem or a flat tire, I could just call up the local agriculture teacher. He or she would come to my aid. I am pretty sure I could travel across America and experience the same thing. Agriculture teachers belong to a close knit family. We help each other out. We are bound by a common bond. There are not many professions that can say this.

Teaching agriculture pays a living wage.

We all like to grumble about our pay. However, if we are honest we have to admit there are not lots of jobs where people are getting filthy rich. I know of a number of agriculture teachers who are making in the \$80,000 range. That is not bad. And I have neighbors who are constantly concerned that the factory or industry where they work is going to close or downsize. I do have neighbors who have been laid off. Making big bucks is nice, but then so is job security. And most teachers belong to a respectable retirement system. In the overall scheme of things, teaching does pay well and has good benefits. It sure beats the \$1 an hour I made pulling broomcorn.

Agriculture teachers change lives.

In my opinion, the greatest benefit of teaching agriculture is touching lives. Nearly any agriculture teacher in the country can tell stories of the

impact they have made on the lives of their students. I received a letter this summer from a student I taught 32 years ago. I had not heard from this student in all that time. He wanted to thank me for inspiring him to be an agriculture teacher. I never knew I had made any impact on this student. Henry Brooks Adams sums it up when he states, "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

Conclusion

Teaching agriculture is a demanding job. Research shows that agriculture teachers put in about 55 hours a week. But the rewards of teaching agriculture far outweigh the negative aspects. And as I get older and realize that I am no longer physically capable of pulling broomcorn all day or roofing houses (I did that too in my younger days), I have to admit that my agriculture education professor at Tarleton State was right when he said that teaching agriculture sure beats working.

Gary Moore is a professor in the Agricultural and Extension Education Department at North Carolina State University. He currently serves as president of the American Association of Agricultural Educators.



Recruiting Agriculture Teachers: *Are we our own worst enemy?*

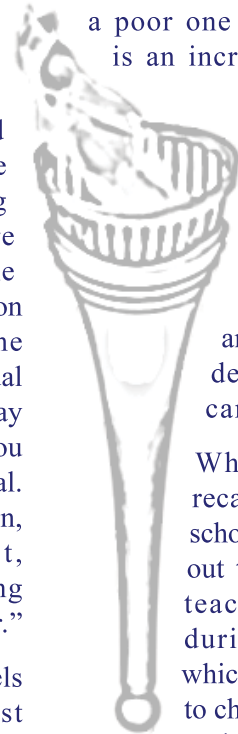
By Chip Bridges

Picture the following scenario if you will: A well respected and dedicated agriculture teacher is conducting a routine Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) visit. The student being visited is at the top of the class in an average sized high school. This eleventh grade student has been an outstanding FFA member and is sure to pursue some type of career in agriculture. During the SAE visit, the teacher and student begin discussing the future plans of the student beyond high school. The student says to the teacher, "You know, I am thinking about becoming an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor." The teacher's response in this situation is critical. In this scenario the teacher's response is not as unusual as you may think. The teacher may say something like this: "Are you crazy? You have so much potential. You could become a veterinarian, or an agricultural scientist, or something far more exciting than just an agriculture teacher."

The teacher means well and feels like this advice is in the best interest of the student; but the fact is, many agricultural education professionals do not focus on recruiting. We let our best students consider many great options for a future career in agriculture without even planting the seed that teaching agriculture and becoming an FFA advisor is a rewarding and challenging career choice.

The topic of recruiting agriculture teachers is not new. This issue has been around for a while. In

the March, 1995 edition of the Agricultural Education Magazine, Allison Touchstone reflected on her initial perception of agricultural education as she entered the course as a high school freshman. As she recalled, "My initial perception of agricultural science and technology was greatly influenced by my first instructor, and that perception was a poor one to say the least." It is an incredible responsibility that agriculture teachers have each and every day. Not only do we impact a student's perception of agriculture, but we also have the power to mold and shape the students' decisions about future careers in agriculture.



When Ms. Touchstone recalls her years in high school, it is inspiring to find out that a new agriculture teacher began teaching during her second year which she says "helped me to change my perception of agriculture and agricultural education." She recalls that her new agriculture teacher "became a role model" and also "influenced and helped me to define my perceptions and opinions about agriculture." We need teachers like this in our profession who inspire and encourage students, and perhaps even motivate them to consider a career in agricultural education. Two years later, in the March – April 1997 edition of the Agricultural Education Magazine,

Allison Touchstone once again challenged our profession to focus on recruiting agriculture teachers by asking the question, "Why not become an Agriculture Instructor?"

Ms. Touchstone's commentary ten years ago still applies today. She

"But the most important thing that we can do as a profession is to provide focus on recruiting agriculture teachers."

remarked, "I don't think that there is a limit on the students who can, and should be recruited to become agriculture teachers." She states that she was once asked, "You could become anything in the world, and you are going to be a teacher? Why?" It is not unreasonable to review those concerns from ten years ago and ask ourselves, have we gotten any better at recruiting teachers? We could spend years talking about the shortage of agriculture teachers (and we have). We could address every issue that impacts the supply and demand of quality agriculture teachers (and continue to do so). **But the most important thing that we can do as a profession is to provide focus on recruiting agriculture teachers.** What are we doing

today that will inspire the next great agriculture teacher and FFA advisor? Are the teachers at the local level given incentive to focus on recruiting future teachers? And most importantly, do we give the perception that teaching agricultural education and serving as an FFA advisor is a worthy profession?

There is no doubt that we could be doing more to recruit teachers into the agricultural education profession. Just being reminded that recruiting is important is a great way to start addressing the issue. There are many tips and ideas on recruiting. Even though they are not new, many of these ideas serve as a reminder that we all need to be proactive in encouraging students to become agriculture teachers. Here are some ideas relating to the recruitment issue:

1. Awards / Recognitions for



The Young Owl Award is provided by the Georgia Department of Agricultural Education and the Georgia FFA Foundation free of charge to any teacher in the state who would like to present this trophy at their local FFA banquet to a student planning to teach agriculture.

students planning to major in Agricultural Education

This is an easy way to provide some much needed encouragement to students who are considering the possibility of teaching agriculture. We all should be recognizing future agriculture teachers and FFA advisors and provide positive reinforcement toward that goal. Each FFA chapter banquet should award at least one student every year with some type of recognition that promotes the student's decision to pursue agricultural education as a career. The Georgia Department of Agricultural Education and the Georgia FFA Foundation provide the "Young Owl" award to any teacher who requests the award to present to a student at their local chapter awards program. This award is a small way to encourage and motivate students to keep working toward becoming an agriculture teacher. It can also be used as a reminder to the student that we all share the dream of seeing them become an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor one day.

2. Scholarships for students entering Agricultural Education majors and careers

Every spring the local newspaper is always covering the "signing-day" in which the best local athletes are receiving scholarships to attend a college or university and play big time sports. The reality is that agricultural education scholarships are

far less glamorous and even come in smaller amounts. However, we should always publicize/recognize a student who receives a scholarship in agricultural education. In addition, we should strive to provide more quality scholarships for students pursuing a career in agricultural education. The more money we can provide in scholarships to students seeking a degree in agricultural education, the more student interest we can generate for the profession.

It is also important to continue to work with local FFA alumni affiliates, and community sponsors to insure that scholarship money exists in every program for students willing to accept the challenge of becoming a teacher of agriculture. One unique scholarship that is provided by the Georgia Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association (GVATA) each year is the "New Teacher" scholarship which provides \$500 to a beginning agriculture teacher. The money is a nice reward for a college student who has just finished a degree program and is about to take on their first job as a teacher and FFA advisor.

Regardless of the amount of a scholarship, we must continue to promote the use of these rewards and incentives to bring positive attention to those dedicated to making agricultural education a career decision.

3. Awards for Teachers who promote Agricultural Education as a Career

Everyone likes to get positive recognition for doing something extraordinary. A great way to provide more focus on recruiting students into agricultural education is to provide some extra incentive to teachers that actually do get results in this effort. Our state's professional organization, GVATA, recognizes the "Teacher of

Teachers” each year at the annual conference. This award is a small step in providing some recognition to those teachers who actually taught some of our current teachers in the profession. The more former students that a teacher currently has as a colleague in this profession, the more reward / award / accolades they should be presented. If we could find a way to provide more award recognition for a teacher’s effort in recruiting, we would be well on our way to insuring there is no

our agricultural education students to become teachers (which we sometimes fail to do), but we should also be looking for ways to include more diversity in our teaching profession. The ideal situation is to recruit students from within our program, but the reality is that we need to look for other sources of future agriculture teachers. With the National FFA initiative to obtain 10,000 quality programs by the year 2015, we are certainly going to have to add agricultural education programs. We will also need to have quality teachers to start these programs. Our profession has not been able

in more non-traditional settings.

Many times we fail to plant the idea that there are great opportunities to teach agriculture when we have the chance to speak with other groups of people outside of the agricultural education family. Some of the best agriculture teachers in Georgia began teaching math, science, or other courses of study before deciding to take a position as an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor. There are also some great agriculture teachers who have joined the team from business and industry. We must continue to seek out agriculture teachers from various sources and not rely solely on recruitment from within our agricultural education classrooms.

5. Promote a positive perception about Teaching Agriculture

There is no greater way to encourage and recruit agricultural education students to become teachers than by simply portraying the best reasons to become a teacher. If we project a positive image, and our actions reflect exactly how great this profession really is, then students will be drawn into the idea of becoming a part of such a great career. Rather than “poor mouthing” the opportunity that a student could have to become an FFA advisor, we should be speaking about all the great things that we get to do in this career. Teaching agricultural education and FFA is more than just a job. It is a rewarding career that is unlike any other profession. Dr. Dennis Sheppard, Agriculture Teacher and FFA Advisor at Putnam County High School in Eatonton, Georgia, made one of the most profound statements about this profession. He said, “Teaching agriculture is not just a job, it is a ‘way of life.’” We

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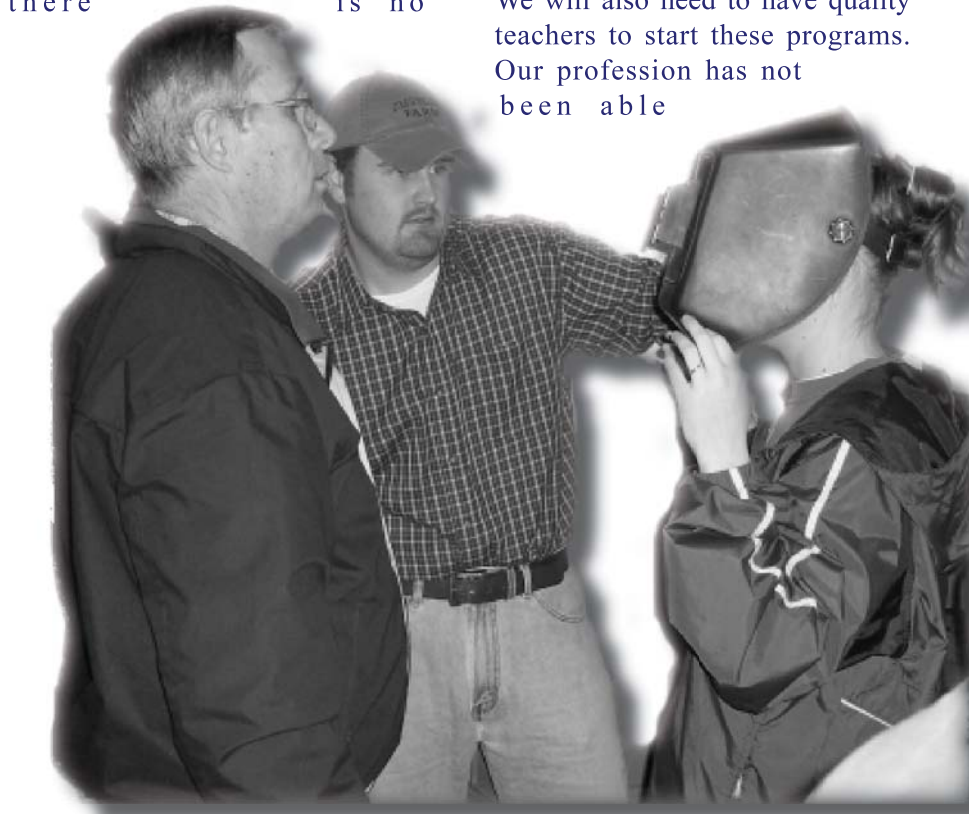


Photo Courtesy of John Ricketts, University of Georgia

shortage of agriculture teachers.

There is still plenty of work that could be done in recognizing those teachers who are a positive influence on a student’s decision to become involved in agricultural education.

4. Increase effort in the Diversity of Recruiting

Not only should we be encouraging

to constantly provide enough teachers to meet the demands. We must focus on recruitment from outside our agricultural education classrooms. We have all the right ingredients to draw other people into our profession. We have a demand and we have a rewarding profession. All we need is to get more exposure for our profession

Dr. Jacque Deeds, Mississippi State University, has generously shared her "Mystery Speaker" speech for the 2007 Southern Region AAAE Conference. With only minor edits to fit the space limitations, you will see a walk through the past 44 years adds a different perspective to ideas for teacher recruitment in our profession.

*Think about it!
Billye*

As I began to think about my history, I realized we haven't changed all that much in my 44 year involvement in Vocational Agricultural Education. Let me tell you my story and see if you don't agree.

In 1963, they started the Vo-Ag program at Drain High School and the new teacher, Dan Dunham—Past National FFA President, came to see my step-dad, Roy "Pappy Hehn," to ask him to be on his advisory committee. Pappy was on the high school board; he had a logging company (the main industry in the area) and a hobby type farm which included cattle, horses and hay, and was from the Curtin part of the school district. Add to that, when I started the program, a child in the program.

When we teach advisory group formation, we talk about representative groups, parents, local Ag industry, school board members and geographic variety, and when possible get people who represent more than one group. When I look back, I realize that is just what Dan had done with his invitation to Pappy.

On one of his many visits with Pappy he suggested I take Ag when I started high school because he thought girls ought to be in the program. He took the time to get to

know me and made me feel important by asking me to be in his program. A recent paper I read from Western Region was a qualitative study about minority recruitment, and one of the main findings was the importance of getting to know the student and the family in the recruitment process. College coaches will tell you the same thing. Something that hasn't changed.

I decided to give Vo-Ag a try because my choices for my one elective were limited. After 6 years of 4-H cooking and sewing I knew Home Economics was not for me, and I had no desire to speak Spanish. Wood shop wasn't open to girls, and since I don't read music, band and chorus were out. So myself and three junior girls started in Ag I, and like all first year students **still** do -- I learned the FFA Creed—"I believe in the future of farming with a faith born not of word but by deeds." I won the local competition and practiced the creed until January, and the district competition which I also won but was not allowed to go to state because I was a girl. Girls had not yet been permitted to officially join FFA so the second place boy went.

That summer we were allowed to show at the local and county fair in FFA. Our mothers made blue vests with hand embroidered "Drain FFA" on the back for us to wear in competitions – for showing we chose tan Lee's. The Douglas County Fair grounds had dorms for students showing livestock so we stayed there. One night I realized all show jeans were dirty and I still had showmanship. Since Dan was headed the 50 miles home, he took the dirty ones home to my Mom who got them at 10 p.m. and had them washed and ironed in the mail box at 6:30 a.m. So here are two more things that haven't changed -- parental involvement and youth organization advisors

who care enough to go above and beyond the job description are important for young people to be successful in youth organizations.

I did my first research project my junior year in high school to have information for my speech. I surveyed district advisors and presidents and State FFA officers about perceptions girls in FFA. Most of the members were in favor, but advisors were not because they were worried about chaperoning boys and girls—as though no other student group had ever done it before.

When I started at Oregon State I started out in general Ag, which was advised by Leno Christensen, the Ag mechanics specialist in Ag Ed (Agricultural Education—is *still* often the home of general Ag or undecided students). I thought I wanted to major in animal science, but by that time Dan was a doctoral student at OSU and told me to talk to the other advisors in Ag Ed because I needed to be a teacher. I did as I was told. Even our most recent research indicates that high school teachers follow closely behind parents in influencing a choice of major, so this is another factor that has not changed.

During my fall Sophomore year at OSU, girls were officially admitted to FFA and I was asked to apply for



my State Farmer degree. I declined because by then all my cattle and sheep had been sold to help cover college expenses. I appreciated the thought but it came too late.

One woman graduated ahead of me and had student taught but never taught at the secondary level. As I interviewed for jobs, I was told at one school I would be expected to wear dresses outside the shop, and another administrator told me I was one of the top candidates on paper and references but the community would not accept a woman. (He also said he would deny ever saying it.) We often wonder why we have

women and minorities who never teach—could they be facing the same type of discrimination from administrators today that I faced back in 1972?

I was offered a job at a vocational center with Jr. and Sr. classes at the center and mini chapters at three high schools for freshmen and sophomores. We had five teachers and an intern who lived at our land lab. I taught a Jr. block at the center and then traveled to a HS to teach three sections of Ag 1 and one of Ag 2 (98% male students). I was in a suburb of Portland and the 1400 students were different from any I had been around. I went to a high school of 250 students and

although where I student taught was much larger, it was a county school with a large Ag industry and a cooperating teacher who was so laid back he was almost comatose. I was not prepared for the students I encountered. I think sometimes that we are still preparing teachers for traditional programs and forget that we should also be preparing them for urban and suburban programs that may be our largest area of growth in the future. If this preparation hasn't changed it should.

The summer after I graduated I went to my first Oregon Vocational Agriculture Teacher's Association



Conference. I was already on the job because the teacher I was replacing asked to leave his contract early to take a job in California. I knew from others about The Order of the Yellow Dog -- the social organization of the Ag teachers. Jean had gone the year before, but they would not initiate her because she didn't have a job. So when I arrived it was going to be a test of gender discrimination. When I showed up at the fair grounds there was a flurry of activity. A group gathered in the corner and began passing pens and paper and another group offered me a beer. When it came time for the initiation I was moved into another room with

the other new teachers until the ceremony began. I learned later that there was a quick rewrite of the ceremony and instructions to the more long-standing members about the changes expected in behavior.

As part of the ceremony in addition to barking, answering questions and lifting our legs, each new member had to be vouched for by an older member. The beginning of informal mentoring of new teachers. We need to ask ourselves, *“Have we changed programs to accommodate minorities and special needs individuals often enough or do we hang on to what is traditional?”* At the banquet the next night it was pointed out that we now have a “Bitch in the Kennel.”

I used to say I learned more about teaching ag and being an FFA advisor drinking beer at summer conferences than I ever did in college. In a way that was true. That was where the real mentoring often took place. Where young teachers could ask questions and not be afraid, where older teachers were willing to talk about some of their early disasters and successes. We have made great strides in formalizing this process with mentor-teacher programs and have analyzed them to death. But have we missed the boat in not encouraging the informal mentoring as well?

At my first state FFA convention as a teacher, my students asked where the other women teachers were and I had to explain that there weren't any. I asked them how they felt about it and they said fine, it made them special. For the first three years I taught I was the only female. Correspondence came out

Continued on page 24

The Agricultural Education Life

by John Ricketts

On those days when I used to wake up early to feed hay while the ground was still hard, and then head off to fix fence until lunch time, followed by an afternoon of working cattle, it was easy to see why living a life of agriculture is endearing to so many people across this country! Growing up and working on the family farm in Middle Tennessee provided some of the most rewarding experiences of my life. However, there is another awesome agricultural way of life – the job of an agriculture teacher. Living the life of an agriculture teacher has provided me just as many if not more rewards than did those glorious days on the farm. Ag teachers, as many of us affectionately refer to ourselves, are rewarded every day with a “satisfying career” in agriculture. A satisfying career in agriculture could be defined as a career (1) that you love, (2) that allows you to live comfortably, and (3) that allows for several opportunities for advancement. As I recruit students for a career in agricultural education, these three points (not the only good reasons to be an ag teacher) seem to be the ones that spark the most interest among potential University of Georgia Agricultural Education majors.

A Job You Can Love

One of the first things that is important to relay to students considering a career in agricultural education is the importance of having a career that you can wake up to every day and love. Have you ever dreamed

of having a job that you love? Let me just tell you, “life is good when you enjoy your job.” I was an Agriculture teacher for several years, and I am convinced it is the best career you can have. Many times it is just downright fun. No day is ever the same, and the energy gleaned from students is contagious. Whether you become a Young Farmer teacher helping students and members of the community with beef herd problems, or a Horticulture instructor training students for a competition in Floriculture judging, it is easy to love a job that combines working with people and working with agriculture.

A Comfortable Living

The next point that is important to share with students considering a career in agricultural education is that teaching is also a viable career option in terms of financial security. I know you are not going to build any Trump Towers on an agriscience instructor salary, but in many states and especially in my state, Georgia, the paycheck is an excellent recruiting tool for a career in agricultural education.

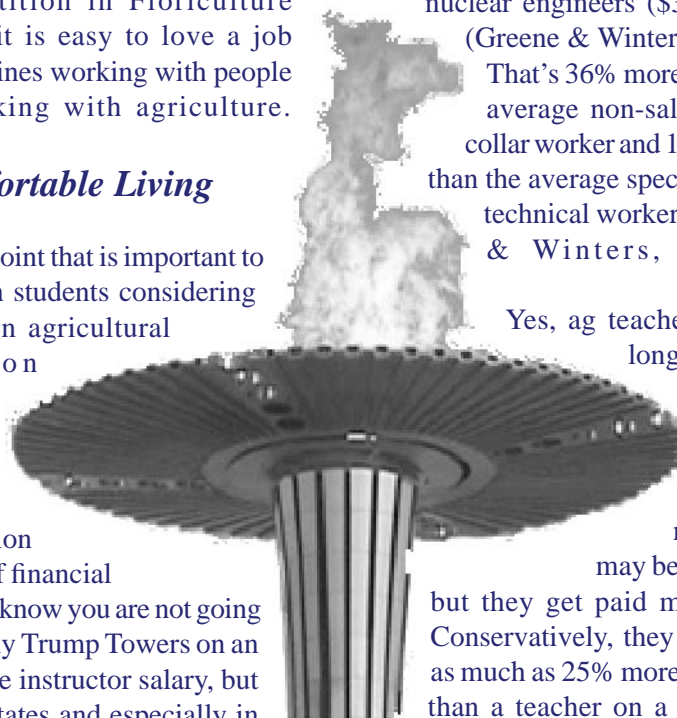
Not that money is everything, but Agricultural Education is a career that offers very adequate salary ranges. You could start right out of college with salaries over \$40,000

per year in Georgia. If you compare that number to the median annual earnings of the average American, 25 years of age or older (WikiAnswers, 2008), which is \$32,000 per year, you can begin to see the financial adequacy of ag teaching. In fact, the average public school teacher’s hourly pay (\$34.06/hour) is higher than the average biologist (\$28.07/hr), mechanical engineer (\$29.76/hr), or chemist (\$30.68/hr) and is actually competitive with computer scientists (\$32.86/hr), dentists (\$35.51/hr), and nuclear engineers (\$36.16/hr) (Greene & Winters, 2005).

That’s 36% more than the average non-sales white collar worker and 11% more than the average specialty and technical worker (Greene & Winters, 2007).

Yes, ag teachers work longer hours so these

numbers may be skewed, but they get paid more too. Conservatively, they get paid as much as 25% more per year than a teacher on a 9-month contract, but in situations where ag teachers are paid for extended day activities and/or supplements the percentage rises. Salaries can climb by the thousands during a career as an Agriculture teacher, based on further degrees and/or years experience. The benefits package associated with working for the school system is also



another advantage. Almost everyone would agree that teachers have better health and retirement benefits than other professionals. You would be hard-pressed to find another career with benefits that allow you to take such good care of your family.

Opportunities for Advancement

Agricultural Education is a career, not just a job. As an Agriculture teacher you can advance your position with continued education such as a Masters degree, a Specialist degree, or maybe even a PhD. In fact, online education programs offered by universities these days allow you to acquire an advanced degree while keeping your current position. These advanced degrees put more money in your pocket, but more importantly they open doors such as school/county/district administration, working for departments of education, teaching at the college level, or entrepreneurship as an educational consultant, etc. The possibilities are endless.

Helpful Hints

As an ag teacher you have the ability to influence your students and their career decisions. Do you love your job? I know teaching has a unique set of challenges, but don't all jobs? If you love your job, then let your students know through your words, but also through your actions. A study by Park and Rudd (2005) identified a list of specific encouraging practices [actions] that agricultural educators can employ to assist students in discovering the *joys and discomforts* of the agricultural education life (See Figure 1).

So, on those days when you wake up early to get to school before the rest of the teachers to check on the greenhouse or the pigs in the barn make up your mind to find some future ag teachers for the profession. When you close the door to your office to put the finishing touches on your lesson plans for the day, remember the many positive aspects of your job and share them with your students. Agricultural education is in dire need of motivated and competent young professionals to provide agricultural education to the next generation. This article tried to present a practical

set of reasons for teaching, but the most important reason to teach is to make a difference in the lives of the young people you work with. The agriculture teacher is second only to mom and dad in terms of the level of influence they have on students. Use your influence wisely and be thankful for the agricultural education life.

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- Have a program for students rather than just a class to take
- Serve as a positive example and role model for teaching
- Encourage student involvement in FFA
- Exhibiting a positive attitude about teaching agriculture
- Demonstrate your enjoyment of teaching agriculture
- Take time, show interest, and care for students
- Gain students' respect
- Conduct a comprehensive (FFA, SAE, Class/lab) program
- Provide lots of leadership development opportunities
- Visit students
- Be prepared to teach students each day
- Keep current with resources and technology
- Care for students and their personal goals
- Show students the "fun" in agriscience teaching



John C. Ricketts is an assistant professor in Agricultural Education at the University of Georgia.

Figure 1. Practices for encouraging students to become agricultural educators (Park & Rudd, 2005, p. 87).

Few Words, Big Meaning

by Dwayne Pavelock & Doug Ullrich

Students eagerly file into the classroom--some with great anticipation, some with uncertainty, and some with a considerable amount of fear. The buzz begins about where they will request to be placed for their field experience as a student teacher in agricultural science. One student mentions that he has to stay in the immediate area because of his apartment lease. Another student provides their well-rehearsed verse of why they need to teach at a school back near their hometown, even though it is over 200 miles away from the university. A third future teacher wants to go to a particular school that doesn't have that great of a program because she has heard that the teacher there will be retiring at the end of the year. The student teacher figures she'll have a great shot at the job if she does well. And then a lone hand is raised... "Which school would teach me everything about a well-rounded program, from quality classroom instruction to maintaining facilities, from good discipline to school and community support, from diverse curriculum offerings to involvement in many FFA activities? Who will teach me about budget and transportation requests, conducting fundraisers, and supervising projects? Where can I learn about adult support groups, service activities, and being a respected member of the community?"

These individuals have assembled

at an orientation meeting for next semester's student teachers. Each student knows, from having observed previous blocks, that they will have to dress professionally each day... no denim--ties for the gentlemen, closed-toe shoes for the ladies--get rid of non-traditional and exposed piercings, etc. The person walks in and utters his first words: "Congratulations, and thank you for choosing the greatest profession in the world."

"What?! In spite of all the questions that exist, this guy wants to congratulate us on a decision we made several years ago? And what have we done to deserve a 'thank you'?"

The discussion about this issue's theme – Passing the Torch – can take on many forms and vantage points. As an agricultural science teacher, we begin making an impression on younger brothers and sisters of high school students; thus, what we do may influence the career choice of an eight- or twelve-year-old. When we teach a high school student, we do things that may influence the career choice of a sophomore or senior. The young adult who arrives at the university, unsure of her or his major, might take our class or join the club we advise. Surely we will be under a watchful eye and impressionable mind. We



Photo courtesy of the University of Arizona

have an opportunity to influence the career choice of students of all ages. So why should we be concerned about the career choice of that person who is fixing to student teach? Haven't they made their career choice? Haven't we done our job to sustain the profession by serving as a teacher educator?

Ingersoll (as cited in the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2002) indicated that an estimated one-third of America's teachers leave the field sometime during their first three years of teaching, and almost one-half leave after five years. A person who is "considering a career in Agricultural Education" is clearly that high school student, the college freshman, and even the student teacher. But aren't the first-year teacher and the one in her tenth year still "considering a career in Agricultural Education." What is being done to retain these teachers? Retention efforts are indeed a part of "Passing the Torch."

This brings us back to the professor who opened the orientation meeting with words like "congratulations" and "thank you." These few words have such big meaning. Quite likely you have been congratulated for some element of success you enjoyed as a teacher. But have you ever been congratulated for becoming a teacher? Perhaps someone has thanked you for something you did as a teacher, but have you ever been thanked for becoming a teacher? Simple words like these can provide a huge boost in a profession that is often thankless.

Our educational system has programs in place for both low-achieving and gifted students. What about the students in the middle? The teaching profession does a

variety of things for early- and late-career teachers, but what about those in the middle? What are we doing for these teachers to retain them in agricultural education? When one is considering leaving the profession, can't we say that they are still "considering a career in Agricultural Education?"

As we focus on what can be said to someone considering a career in AgEd, let's remember to also focus on those already in the profession. The demands of being a teacher are heavy, and balancing these demands with a personal life can lead one to quickly question her or his career choice. We must give attention to those early- to mid-career teachers and realize that we have to work at keeping them in the field of agricultural education. What can we do? We can't do much about increased teacher pay, repayment of student loans, or other financial options that are thought to be most important to teacher retention. Let's examine a few options that have little monetary implications, things we can do as an individual...

- Mentoring – First-year teachers frequently have a mentor, either formal or informal, who shows them how to fill out transportation requests, submit purchase orders, etc. Teachers with a few years experience could also use a mentor to help them deal with burn-out, increased demands on their time, added responsibility, etc.
- Induction Program – Wong & Wong (2008) discuss the need for induction programs which involve groups instead of the traditional one-on-one element of mentoring. Induction is also more structured and sustained. Consider your student teaching blocks. Once they become teachers at separate schools, they tend to maintain some cohesiveness and still congregate at various activities and FFA events. It seems that such a bond could be established by induction groups within schools and across disciplines.

- Professional Development – Teachers usually have multiple and varied options for professional development. How many of these opportunities address issues that lead to teacher burn-out? Organized efforts to discuss the handling of such issues are needed, such as dealing with administrative ordeals, student and parent apathy, student behavior, paperwork, being used as a "dumping ground," and time management.
- Recognize Teacher Success – I don't think there has ever been a teacher who won a state livestock judging contest, a national proficiency award, the county steer show, or any other competitive event AS A TEACHER. Now, lots of teachers have had STUDENTS who achieved this level of success, and those students have rightfully been congratulated. But why don't we recognize those teachers who supervised that project, assisted in completing the application, or drove the students to the contest with a simple phone call or e-mail? The student may have done most of the work, but let's recognize our professional colleagues for serving as a driving force in that student's success.
- Refer to Maslow – The grand scheme of life and our pursuit for happiness ultimately leads to Maslow's Hierarchy for Human Needs. Young teachers more often view a higher salary as a point of success. Others may

believe it is awards received. Ultimately, most all teachers who remain in the profession simply find a sense of fulfillment from the success of others. Perhaps we can retain more teachers if we can help them realize the good they have done for others, and further help them realize that no amount of salary can replace such a contribution to society.

Many who are currently in our profession will always be “considering a career in Agricultural Education.” What will we tell them in an effort to retain them as teachers? Perhaps a good start would be to simply say “congratulations” and “thank you.”

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Dwayne Pavelock is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural & Industrial Sciences at Sam Houston State University.

Bridges...Continued from page 15

should always portray this positive enthusiasm for being an agriculture teacher. We should also make sure that the activities in our daily classroom instruction are a positive reflection on our chosen career. There is little hope of attracting the best and brightest students if they are not impressed and excited about participation in agriculture courses. Our influence on these students is the most important part of recruiting the next generation of agriculture teachers. Not only should we portray the right image, but we should also encourage our best students to consider teaching agriculture as a profession.

Recruiting is a continuous effort. We must make this effort in every aspect of our daily activities. State staff members in agricultural education must remember to provide focus on recruitment when planning and implementing programs and activities. Agriculture teachers and FFA advisors must remember

Doug Ullrich is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural & Industrial Sciences at Sam Houston State University.



to “plant the seed” to every student that participates. Teacher educators at our colleges and universities must remember to be involved with secondary agricultural education programs. We must all work together to provide continuous focus on recruitment. There must always be positive attitude and commitment to seeing our profession flourish. Many agricultural education professionals believe that we are past the days of “poor mouthing” and talking down to students about a career as a teacher and FFA advisor. This may be true; but we should never fail to ask ourselves – Are we helping or hurting our profession? There should always be a focus on what we are doing to provide quality agriculture teachers. We cannot afford to be our own worst enemy in regard to recruitment.

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Chip Bridges is the North Region Coordinator in Agricultural Education for the Georgia Department of Education

The Toughest Job You'll Ever Love

by John B. Dimick

The *Toughest Job You'll Ever Love* was a pitch line someone used several years ago; maybe it was the army, but I thought at the time when I first heard it that it described perfectly what those of us in Ag Education deal with everyday. Make bones about it, classroom teaching agriculture science and serving as an FFA Advisor is an extremely tough and challenging profession. Those that do it for a significant number of years usually do so because they enjoy and understand the challenge of impacting student's lives as well as all of the attendant details that go with that. It's not an easy occupation, but I'd be hard pressed to come up with a more rewarding one.

So what's the trick to convincing a student to follow in your footsteps? There's no secret, but there is a process of discovery that we as teachers can facilitate because it begins the first time we meet a student. When we are positive about what we do and the time we put in beyond the classroom day; when we dress professionally and exemplify the things we expect of students, like

punctuality and organization; when we care enough about kids to hold them to high standards and do what needs to be done to help them meet them; when we are proud of what we do and the industry we represent on a daily basis; they will notice that. When they start to see you as a person who is willing to invest personal time and energy in them, they will notice that too. At some point, they'll start to figure out that they are the beneficiary of something truly special, and if you as a teacher take the time to "discover" them and encourage them to consider a career doing what you do, many times you'll find a student who was already thinking about it anyway. It doesn't take much more than saying, "You know, I think you'd make a great teacher," or "Do you want to talk about being an

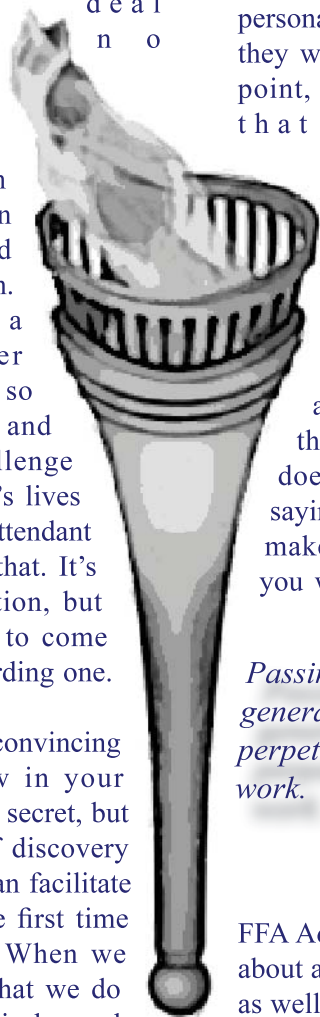
Passing the torch to the next generation--a rewarding and perpetuation of one man's life work.

FFA Advisor?" Be prepared to talk about all of the steps in preparation as well as pay and benefits because they'll ask. They will ask about time commitment and probably everything else that they've watched you deal with. It's important that

you are honest, positive and open about your profession. Be sure that you let them know that while Ag teachers earn a good living, if they want a big money job, they need to look outside the profession. Finally, be sure that they are aware that to be successful, they will have to invest incredible amounts of time, passion and energy as much or more than any other position in education. As part of that discussion, help them understand and that they will need to be visible and an active, positive figure in the community.

It's pretty simple--the whole process of passing the torch is based on being aware that the kids you deal with everyday learn as much or more from what they see you do as what you say to them. Like it or not, they learn from your example. If you are positive about what you do, even though it's a tough job that requires a myriad of sacrifices from every quarter, they will learn by watching and listening and make choices based on that. Unfortunately, if the example they see is negative about the profession: time commitment, wages, whatever--they most likely will choose another occupation, and I wouldn't blame them much.

My thirty-three year career as an Ag Science Instructor and FFA Advisor was the toughest job I ever loved. It had it's moments to be sure, like any occupation, but in the final analysis, the number of lives I was able to change in a



positive way and the opportunities that I personally enjoyed made it all worthwhile. And yes, I'd do it again. By the way, fourteen of my students went on to pursue an agriculture teaching career, and today twelve of them are still teaching in five states.



John Dimick is a retired Agricultural Science teacher from Crater High School in Dimick and was an Ag Science and Technology Instructor, FFA Advisor from 1970 to 2003.



Continued from page 17



from the SDE addressed to Dear Gentlemen "and Jacque," Like I was an afterthought. I must say going to conferences with 125 men and me was fun and I never was without a dance partner. However, I did get a little tired of the lady Ag teacher jokes. At one conference my number was called for a door prize. I realized, I had been setup when they gave me a stud finder. But I just scanned the room and said, "Well there are none in here." In those days it was go along to get along, now some of the things I encountered would be considered sexual harassment.

I learned a lot about the importance of a good relationship with administration at my second school, which was a single teacher department, with an assistant superintendent who was the former Ag teacher when the program was one of the top in the state. The teacher leaving said Assistant Sup was always looking over your shoulder and questioning what you were doing. So I took a different tack and went to see him when I first came on the job to ask for his help in rebuilding the program and if he would be an ex-officio member of the advisory committee. He was the greatest asset I had – he really just wanted to be informed. He was the first person I called when we got home from a successful competition. I have often used him in my university teaching about the importance of developing good relationships with administrators and community leaders and how important they are to successful programs. ***This***

Continued on page 28

Passing the Torch

by Al DeRose

Agriculture teaching is one of the best professions in the field of agriculture. I look at it as not a job, but as something you love to do and look forward to every day going to the classroom. You are molding tomorrow's agriculture leaders and having fun doing it. As an agriculture teacher you play many roles. You are a teacher, parent figure, counselor, businessman, administrator, community leader, and most important-

You set the example setting having right and

motivating students to achieve their dreams and goals. The extra hours spent and hard work is very rewarding in this profession. The awards received and achievements accomplished by your students are the pay back for all the extra work and hours you put in. There is nothing more rewarding to me, as an agriculture teacher of 36 years at Atascadero High School, Atascadero, California, than to realize and watch students achieve their dreams and goals and become successful leaders in their chosen field. Years later, numerous past students will comment to me that the principles they learned while in the agriculture classroom or their experiences in the National FFA Organization has

lead them to their success today.

You need to give it 110% and at the same time have a balanced life. You need to rank your priorities as God, family, and then your profession. I always did something fun with the family on weekends and focus on my family during our vacations. My children

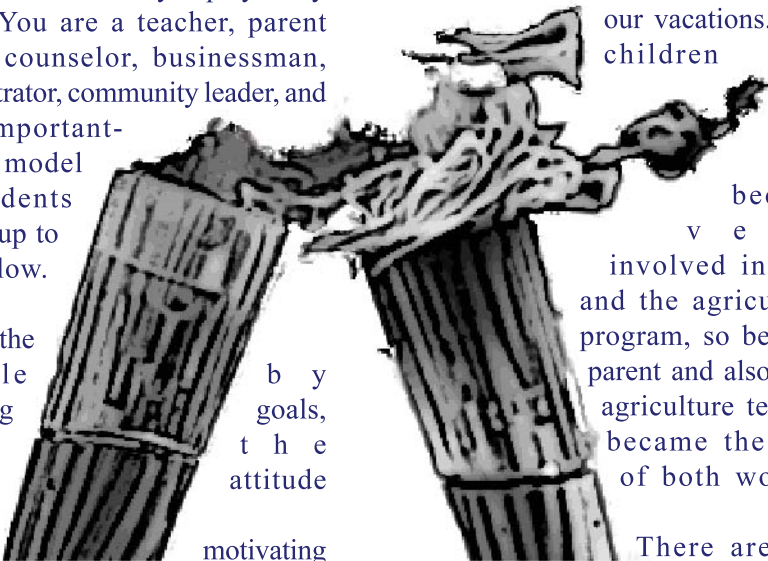
later became very involved in FFA and the agriculture program, so being a parent and also their agriculture teacher became the best of both worlds.

There are key people and departments at your school that you need to build a relationship and have open communication to become more effective and successful as an agriculture teacher. These people are your administrators, school board members, secretaries, counselors and the budget personnel. You need to get to know your transportation department, maintenance department and all of the mechanics. They will all play an important role supporting and encouraging the future of your program. Build an advisory committee with the local business and agriculture leaders to guide and support your curriculum to make sure you are on the cutting edge. Organize a booster club of parents and supporters from

the community to help finance and chaperone the activities and events throughout the year.

In a multi-person department, it is imperative that there are weekly staff meetings to keep the communication open and inform the department staff of job expectations and to track their accomplishments. A copy of the minutes of all staff meetings should be sent to your principal for documentation and accountability.

To replace the position of a successful and dedicated agriculture teacher can be a challenge. The expectations of the students and community are hard to meet. Passion and enthusiasm, along with character and integrity, is a hard order to fill. The young generation coming into the ranks has the leadership and skills to be successful. It is the heart and soul of that new teacher that will help make him/her successful and able to run with that torch.



Al DeRose is a retired Retired Agriculture Teacher Atascadero High School Atascadero, California

Tabulating Career Development Events: A Contest Management Approach

by Mike Spiess

Participation in FFA and 4H has been shown to have a significant positive effect on student GPA and obtainment of baccalaureate degrees (Ball & Garton, 2002). Colleges of Agriculture commonly sponsor the career development events (CDE) for FFA and 4H. These events or contests are a recruiting tool for students in FFA and 4H. Hosting CDEs is also an important service to secondary agricultural education and 4H. Although the organization of these events varies widely from campus to campus, faculty are commonly asked to advise these contests. Organizing the contest requires knowledge of the contest rules, preparation of materials and classes (areas of the contest), and the tabulation of the results. At most institutions CDEs are held once a year so experience and practice in hosting the event is limited. In many cases tabulations is treated as simply a collation and summary of the contest scoring, however the systematic approach described here can increase tabulations success and reduce the stress of hosting the CDE. Implementing a systematic tabulations process that is integrated into the entire contest organization is the objective.

The goal of CDE tabulations should be to provide accurate results in a timely manner with minimum effort. For many host schools the CDEs are conducted during a span of less than six hours and final results are expected soon after the contest is concluded. The tabula-

tions system should be designed around the following principles: Tabulations that are performed at the contest site and conducted as the contest is in progress are easier to troubleshoot because contestants and judges are still at the CDE venue. Well identified contest materials are more likely to be processed correctly than materials where students have to write their name or ID number on the materials. Double checking of tabulations is a key to quality assurance.

Contest Preparation

The CDE tabulations process should begin well in advance of the actual event with a review of the contest rules. The tabulations programs should be configured for changes in the contest rules and class or category name changes. These should be checked well in advance of the contest. It is particularly important that subtle issues such as determining sub-contest awards and tie break-

ing be worked out in advance. The quality of contest rules varies widely from state to state and contest to contest (California Agricultural Teachers' Association, 2007). Advisors are encouraged to work with governing bodies to clarify the rules if the rules are ambiguous.

Contest materials should be pre-labeled with the class and contestant number. Additional benefit can be obtained by pre-printing the rotation group on the materials so they can be easily sorted. It is most important that similar materials such as Scantron test sheets and placing cards be clearly identified since they can be easily mixed up by the contestants or the tabulators. The tabulations program can be used for this labeling or labels can be "mail merged" onto contest materials. Modern copy machines that can serve as printers can be used as an efficient and cost effective way to print materials customized with contestant number.

Table 1 – Example of ID number assignments.

<i>ID Number</i>	<i>Rotation Group</i>	<i>Team/Contestant</i>
1	1	Team 1/1
2	2	Team 1/2
3	3	Team 1/3
4	4	Team 1/4
5	5	Team 2/1
6	6	Team 2/2
7	1	Team 2/3
8	2	Team 3/1
9	3	Team 3/2
10	4	Team 3/3
11	5	Team 3/4

Contest Management

Registration should be conducted in an organized way to distribute contestants into balanced rotation groups and make the best use of contest materials. This is most easily accomplished by using name tags pre-printed with the contestant number and rotation group. Name tags are handed out in numerical contestant order during the registration process to contestants grouped into teams. No numbers are skipped if a team is not complete. Pre-assignment of groups assures that team members are in different groups. An example of ID number and the group assignments for six rotation groups is shown in Table 1.

Contest group leaders can easily separate contestants because the group is printed on the name tag. Using the same methods as contest material labeling the name tags can be prepared by the tabulations program or by "mail merging".

During the contest, materials should be picked up after each rotation. Each group of materials should be examined for missing materials and switched materials. For example a contestant used the wrong placing card for a class. A tabulations system should report the number or percentage of scores processed with each rotation which will help determine if materials are missing or that an entire area or class is missing a group of scores. Quick identification of problems gives the contest advisor more time to troubleshoot and correct the problem while the contestants and judges are available.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance checks the correct entry of the contestants and there scores as well as the correct tabulation of the scores. Before scores are entered contestant ID number,

name, and team should be double checked. Data entry of scores by experienced people typically results in 5-10 errors per 1000 entries based on measured error entry of 2 digit scores. However there are many other places to inject errors into the process that need to be examined such as multiplying or weighting a machine scored test, transcribing contest materials onto a score card, calculating a placing score, and adding up a score sheet. Ideally your tabulations system should use the raw score and minimize any human computation that can induce errors prior to tabulation. Such manipulations induce additional errors that are hard to double check. Data entry can be easily checked by either double checking each batch of scores entered against the original materials or by entering scores on two different computers and comparing the results electronically.

Correct tabulations involve the addition of scores, breaking of ties, selecting of contestants for team scoring, and reporting. The addition is the easy part and can be accomplished by simple spreadsheets. Selection of the top three out of four contestants for total team scores requires more complex programming. Tie breaking can be a complex programming task depending on the number of levels used to break ties. For some contests the lack of tie breaking rules is equally troublesome. Develop a plan to deal with ties prior to the contest. Testing the computational part of tabulations prior to the contest helps identify issues and prevents mistakes during the contest. Contest advisors are well served to be engaged in the tabulations process because they have intimate knowledge of the contest and are the most likely people to spot a problem. For example if scores are low in a class the advisor will know if the class is just difficult

or if a tabulations problem exists.

Conclusion

Effective tabulations begin with good organization and a systems approach such as the one described above. Advisors are encouraged to develop a checklist that follows the steps for contest materials preparation, contest management, and quality assurance. Each contest will be different. Do tabulations require a specialized computer program? No. However a program that provides a framework for the tabulations system is helpful for insuring smooth and accurate tabulations. The system the contest advisor develops needs to be flexible since even the best organized events will have unexpected issues arise.

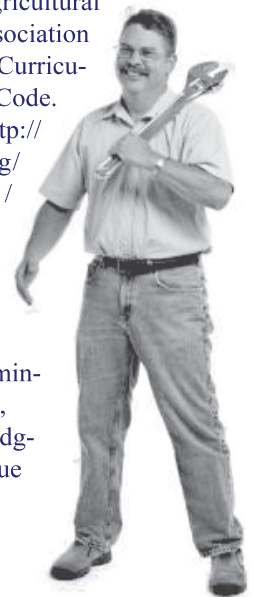
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Mike Spiess works in the Agricultural Engineering Technology & Agricultural Education Unit at California State University, Chico



Deeds...Continued from page 24

again--hasn't changed.

School funding has always been a factor and something that hasn't changed. When I was teaching at Cottage Grove, the schools closed at Thanksgiving because they had not passed a budget and the money ran out. When my school closed I was invited back to OSU to finish my masters and work on the National Standards for Ag programs project. Harold Crawford & Richard Carter and others had been working on developing national standards and were helping states modify and develop state standards. Sound familiar? I was recently on the National Council Standards initiative which has become an important element of the 10 by 15 project. Interestingly, the standards have not changed a lot in almost 30 years. Some adjustments, (number of SAEP visits) some additions (new FFA programs), but really nothing new and innovative. *Is that because we are resistant to change or because we have had the right formula all along and all we need to do is use and enforce it?*

In 1979, I went to my first AVA convention as an OVATA officer and was probably one of less than 10 women at the meeting who wasn't a spouse. This **has** changed. There are far more women and Hispanics attending in leadership positions. But something else that has changed is the number of African Americans in our ranks has seemed to diminished. (We have lost the participation and leadership of most of our 1890 institutions.) As was pointed out to me yesterday—***should our research agenda speak to this concern?***

One of the main topics at that first AVA meeting was recruitment of new teachers and what the professional organizations could do

to help. The recruitment committee proposed a PSA that could be copied and distributed to all the states. As I recall it started with something like do you like to drive a tractor, and work with animals and other more very traditional things? Then you might like to be an Ag teacher. Its introduction was followed by much heated discussion about how limiting it was and how it would not appeal to non-traditional audiences. How often have we heard this same discussion about recruitment proposals in recent years? One thing that hasn't changed is the life-long mentoring relationships Ag teachers have with their students.

When I was serving as the first female President to the OVATA, Dan Dunham again approached me about my career and said it was time to get my doctorate. Since he was at the National Center for Voc Ed at The Ohio State University, that was where I was supposed to go and so I did.

What about some of the things that should change? We say we have new curriculum, but do we? We still teach breeds of livestock – in fact there are more breeds now—Simmentals and Charolais were exotics when I was teaching. We still have students memorize the FFA Creed --is there a good reason to do this other than getting the Greenhand degree? If you tell me it is public speaking, then is there something more relevant to some of their lives we could use? Even when we do introduce new curriculum, a lot of teachers don't use it. They may deliver it differently but the content is pretty much the same. They teach what they know and are comfortable with, without the context. **Why?** Because who do we have write the curriculum in most states—practicing teachers and sometimes not reviewed by researchers and industry individuals on the cutting edge. Wayne Gretski, the great

hockey player, was asked why he was so successful at getting the great shots, and he said, "You skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it is now." **Think about it.**

Many of our secondary classrooms have excellent technology but the walls are still covered with banners and plaques from the last 10-30 years and very often just junk--much like my first classroom all those years ago but the technology was an overhead projector and I was happy to have it. I don't know, is this the image we want to project?

I have spent my time talking more about agricultural education, Big A, Big E, because that is my background. I see one of the major changes for the better at the university level is the diversification of our departments to include, more non-formal and international education programs, the addition of specializations in agricultural communications and leadership. Most of our departments have embraced agricultural education as a way to grow and prosper in a larger agricultural environment.

I still believe the thing that shouldn't change is the personal nature of agriculture education, whether it is teaching high school, working with extension, in communications or even with international programs. The one-on-one we have with our clients hasn't changed.

As we recruit, teach and mentor, remember the saying that has always been a part of my ag ed —people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Thank you all for caring.

Jacque Deeds is a professor of Agricultural Education at Mississippi State University.