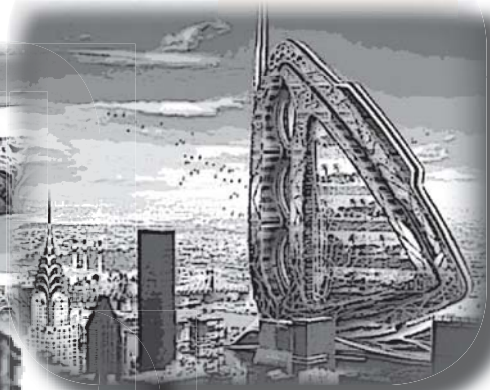
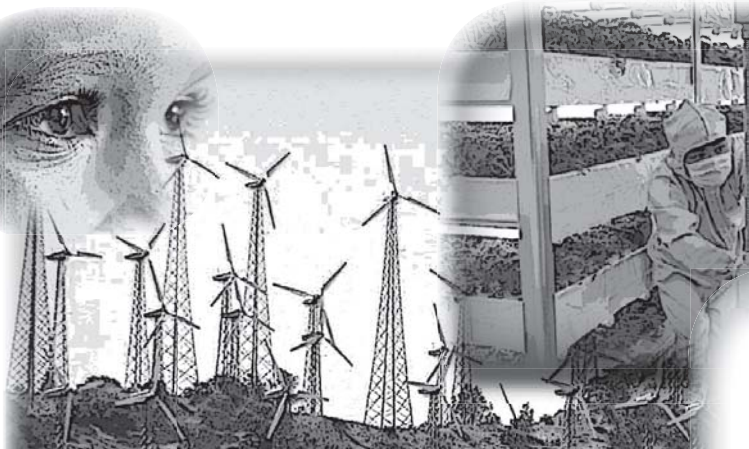


July/August
2009

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Issue 1

The Agricultural **EDUCATION**

M A G A Z I N E



The Future—

*What are you doing to bring
the best & brightest
to our profession?*

Back to the Future IV!

By Billye Foster

Do you remember the Michael J. Fox movie, *Back to the Future*? There were actually three movies in the series, all centered around a high school boy, a crazy scientist and time travel. The plots all focused on the young man discovering things about his future or his family's past and his ability to alter the present by making small changes in the past.

Holding that image in mind, let's take a moment and play the "What if..." game. You know, *What if George Washington had never crossed the Delaware?*, or *What if women and minorities never gained the right to vote?*, or **What if each of us, as professionals in Agricultural Education had successfully recruited 3 new Agriscience teachers in the past 5 years?** We are an interesting breed, are we not? We all seem to have the ability to expound on the wonders of our world--how great it is to work with young people, the many opportunities Agricultural Education and the FFA offer our students. Over the past 2 1/2 years as editor of this magazine, I have read countless articles written by teachers, teacher educators, graduate students and other professionals in our discipline raving on and on about the wonders of this profession. And yet, we still have a teacher shortage. And we still do not reach all students in all high schools across America.



Why do you suppose that is so?

Often I am amazed at the many ways we are able to reinvent our curricula, our philosophies, even our methodologies for teaching, and yet how much of these shiny new methods, curricula and philosophies are REALLY new? It seems as though when we can't solve the tough challenges--like teacher shortages and struggling programs we tend to fall back on our endless ability to repackage and improve our wares.

I suppose I sound pretty cynical don't I? I tend to do that when I get frustrated. Like many of you I have spent the majority of my professional life in Agricultural Education. Sometimes I think it is so great I can't understand why everyone doesn't want to be a part of it. I think we are a fairly intelligent group of people--so why can we solve this recruitment issue? Are

we letting the world pass us by?

The answer may be right under our noses...maybe you know the answer...maybe one of your students will know the answer. This issue provides us with a variety of possible clues.

I challenge you to enjoy this issue and look for the unique ideas presented here. Then I want you to take it a step further--find a way to incorporate them into your program. Challenge yourself to recruit 10 new students to your program this year. If you do, the next time someone says, "Let's play the What If game," you can say-- "I already did!"



Billye Foster is a Professor at the University of Arizona and is Editor of The Agricultural Education Magazine.

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What are you doing to bring
the best & brightest to our profession?**

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Article Submission

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What can YOU do to bring the best and brightest to our profession?

by Shannon Washburn & Wendy Warner

It is estimated that there will only be 758 qualified agriculture teachers prepared to enter the field for fall of 2009. Over the past studies, only approximately 53% of qualified teachers will enter the field, leaving only 401 to enter the profession. The state data shows that they expect to have 652 positions to fill leaving a 251 (38.5%) teacher deficit. This has the potential to reach epidemic proportions if we are unable to recruit additional students into the field of agricultural education and the growth in secondary agricultural education programs continues (Kantrovich, 2007, p. 7).

“The data suggest that after just five years, between 40 and 50 percent of all beginning teachers have left the profession. Why do beginning teachers leave at such high rates?” (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

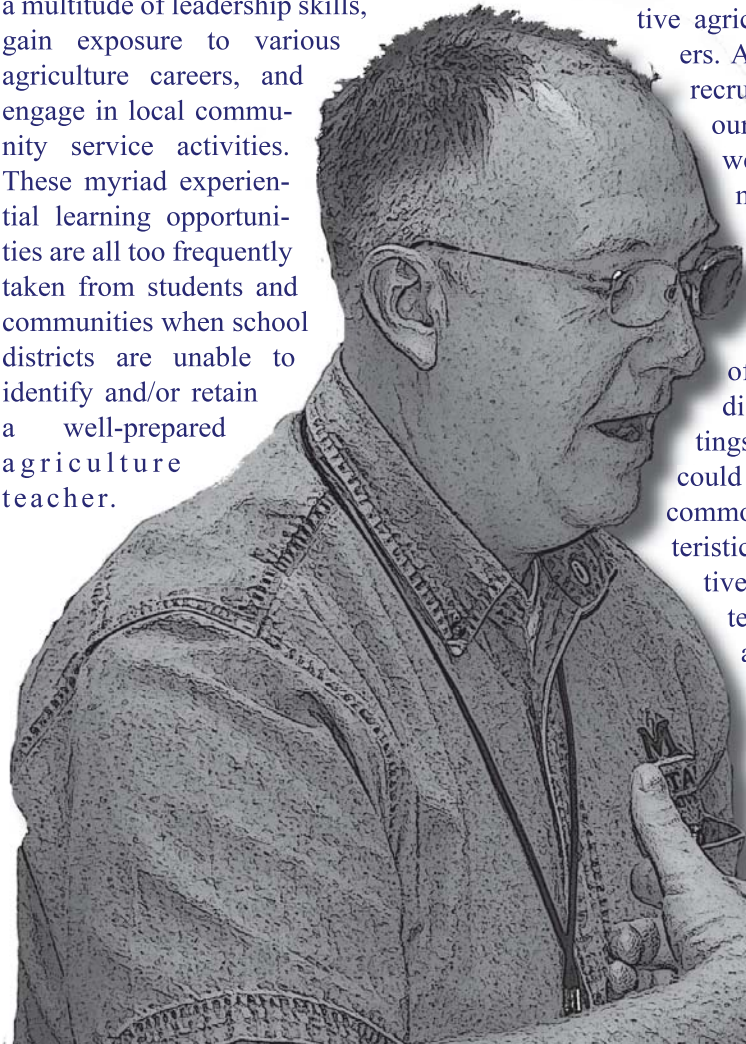
These bleak statistics are not unfamiliar. For as long as many readers can recall, there has been ongoing attention to the difficulties of recruiting new agriculture teachers to the profession. It has been well documented that the teacher shortage challenge is further exacerbated by the number of agriculture teachers who exit the profession after spending just a year or two in the classroom.

The perpetual shortage of agriculture teachers has impacts that reach far beyond a reported statistic. It goes without saying that middle

and high school students enrolled in agriculture courses deserve the best and brightest teachers that our profession has to offer. Additionally, schools, families, communities, and the agriculture industry have a vested interest in the preparation, placement, and longevity of talented young teachers. The total program model comprised of classroom and laboratory instruction, supervised experience, and FFA provides students with opportunities to develop a multitude of leadership skills, gain exposure to various agriculture careers, and engage in local community service activities. These myriad experiential learning opportunities are all too frequently taken from students and communities when school districts are unable to identify and/or retain a well-prepared agriculture teacher.

What qualities make an agriculture teacher the best? An answer to this simple question can generate numerous results. Effective teachers have been characterized as demonstrating productive teaching behaviors, being organized, successfully managing a classroom, promoting positive interpersonal relationships, and participating in professional activities (Miller, W. W., Kahler, A., A., & Rheault, K., 1989). A study by Dyer and Roberts (2004) identified

forty characteristics of effective agriculture teachers. As we look to recruit the best to our profession, we need to be mindful that “the best” can manifest itself in a variety of ways across different settings. While we could find many common characteristics of effective agriculture teachers, being an individual and finding ways to work within a specific set of circumstances in service to the unique



*Continued
on page 9...*

The Face(book)s of the *Next Generation* of Agricultural Educators

By Brandi Disberger

What's on your mind?

This question is asked at the top of my Facebook page each time I login. My profile page lists personal information, my profession as an agricultural educator for the last 8 years at Southeast of Saline High School, and my groups that include "KAAE Novice Teachers." I realize, as an agricultural educator you may be "in the know" with Facebook, or even a self proclaimed Facebook junkie, however, you may still be trying to figure out what it is and what the hype is all about. Nonetheless, we can all relate to what is on my mind today. I am challenged with the future of our profession, where to find the next generation of agricultural education instructors, how to train them, and most of all, how to keep them in the profession. My status update reads...what does the next generation of agricultural educators look like? The answer...the students that we as teachers are recruiting and teaching today!

What's on my mind?

How do we recruit the best and brightest to our profession? My first thought is of Kevin Gleason, a veteran teacher from Uniontown, KS. Mr. Gleason takes every opportunity to remind us as his colleagues that part of our job as agricultural educators is to first educate our own students about the opportunities in the profession. Mr. Gleason reminds us to return home from conferences and tell the students all about it, from

the tours to the sessions, and most of all the camaraderie among the teachers. He never fails to remind his students that his closest friends are his fellow ag teachers. These are things students can relate to! Another important message Mr. Gleason has always shared is the flip side of this...all too often we are sitting in our classroom discussing the challenges of our job, from budget constraints to challenging students; using this time to "vent" is detrimental to the future of our profession.

As teachers we can list our top five students in any number of categories, public speakers, judging teams and academics, but can you list the top five students who may be successful as agricultural education teachers? The qualities that you are looking for may not be the best in a CDE or the strongest SAE program but those students who possess communication skills, are dedicated individuals and who enjoy teaching others and seeing them succeed. First, look at your own program and identify those students,



then look beyond the walls of your own program. Students who you encounter in district/regional or state events that show the skills needed to be successful in our profession should be encouraged as well. There are no limits or boundaries in the recruitment for our profession. We must shine a positive light on what we do, we must share with others the successes of our profession and most of all we must identify potential students in our programs and recruit them to the profession just as we encourage them to pay their dues and attend FFA events.

What's on my mind?

How do we train these teachers and keep them excited about the profession during the four to five college years of separation from the students, members and FFA programs? As teachers we have to maintain contact with students

we have recruited to the profession. As they go off to college to learn about the profession, they may very well become disconnected with the very organization and people who got them excited about this career in the beginning. Educational institutions need to foster programs that keep students involved with agricultural education classrooms and teachers during their education. However, this is not possible if we as teachers are not willing to provide these services. Get in contact with the educational institution, be a guest speaker, host students at your school and become involved in their education. Most importantly, however, stay in contact with them. Talk to them about your successes, help them choose a teaching internship site, and be there when they are looking for jobs. A phone call or e-mail, an invitation to an FFA function, or becoming their friend on Facebook may be the very thing that motivates them to graduate with a degree in agricultural education, and teach.

What's on my mind?

How do we keep these eager and enthusiastic teachers in the agricultural education classroom? I believe in and value recruitment and have seen firsthand powerful programs that bring teachers to the profession, but how do we keep them and ensure they are the most effective teachers they can be? With the support of the Kansas Association of Agricultural Educators and the Kansas FFA Foundation we have launched a program to keep those teachers we recruited and formally educated as a vital part of our profession for years to come. I coordinate the Kansas "TIPs" or Teacher Induction Program which has two major components: mentoring by experienced teachers and ongoing training by the program coordinator. The program provides four quarterly

meetings, two of which happen at the summer and winter agricultural education teacher conferences and include training and a meal with their mentor. Two more meetings, in October and March, touch on the issues they are facing right there and then as a first year teacher. From time management to discipline, we share successes and challenges and most of all, offer solutions.

The biggest challenge to this program is getting in contact with the newly hired teachers. As the vacancy bulletin lists the new hires on the state list serve, I begin the daunting task of locating these teachers. Many are in transition during the summer months, and may not have a current phone number, e-mail or mailing address. With the help of the school, other teachers and Google research, I contact the teacher and welcome them to the profession. During a conversation with a graduating class from the Novice Teacher program I was asking advice for how to best communicate with them--their solution was Facebook. I have discovered that no matter where they are living and how busy they are, this generation of teachers will maintain and check their online profiles. This technology was something unfamiliar to me, but I began the adventure and sure enough, I could locate the new teachers, send messages and receive information back faster than any other means of communication I had used. Many times there are questions that are right at the forefront of their minds, and they are able to get them answered in the first contact I have with them. The next priority is helping them register for the annual summer conference and getting them to attend the 1st Novice Teacher Meeting held in conjunction with that event. This can be a challenging task as many have a hard time asking for money to attend a conference from administrators

they barely know, not to mention finding time to attend while they are moving into their new community and classroom. This early contact is vital to their success. Along with the meetings, I publish and distribute a monthly e-mail newsletter that gives state FFA and Agricultural Education deadlines, touches on what they should be working on during the month and reminds novice teachers and mentors to visit about time sensitive topics. This e-mail newsletter not only gives them an update, but also an open line of communication to ask burning questions they may have by simply pressing the "reply" button.

As I mentioned, I began by using Facebook to locate newly hired teachers so I could communicate with them. I created a group titled "KAAE Novice Agriculture Teachers" and invited them to join. They also added me as a friend, and by doing this I was alerted with their update status. This tool allowed me to gauge their personal and professional transition into teaching. When a new teacher posted "The worst day yet!" I quickly responded so we could get them some help. What a wonderful way to maintain contact with the teachers and get them help when they needed it the most. So what can you do? If you are in a state that has a novice teacher induction program, get involved. If you are in a state that does not currently have a program, create one!

What's on my mind?

The next generation of agricultural educators may not look like us, teach like us or communicate like us. But their future is bright and the future of our profession is bright if we take an active role in recruiting, training and retaining these young professionals. In order to do this, we must learn to communicate with our students and potential teachers "in their world." We have to use their technology to impact and stay connected with

them. My current status: The future of our profession is on Facebook! Authors Note- Resources about individual state's novice teacher programs, including an outline for the Kansas program can be found at <http://www.naae.org/links/mentoring/states.htm>

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November/ December 2009

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*Funding Strategies--
It's a Family Thing!*

THEME ARTICLE

Behold! the Power of Teacher Collaboration

By Ann M. De Lay

Teaching is hard work! As a result, the profession is notorious for losing members of its ranks in droves every year (Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, & Meisels, 2007). Career dissatisfaction and isolation are two major factors compelling teachers to seek employment elsewhere (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004; Wilhelm, Dewhurst-Savellis, & Parker, 2000). The solitary nature of the job, combined with its hectic pace and less than flattering public image tend to beat teachers down rather than bring them together. These findings seem to paint a rather grim picture of teaching. However it doesn't have to be. Behold, the power of teacher collaboration!

Teacher collaboration tends to encourage teachers to remain in the profession from year to year (Boone & Boone, 2007). The phenomenon happens when teachers with common history

or culture engage together in experiences toward reaching a joint goal. These experiences serve as spring boards for further opportunities of working together (Dooner, Mandzuk, & Clifton, 2008). By forging relationships among individuals with similar professional roles and challenges, teachers feel a stronger and more positive connection to one another and the profession they love. Teacher collaboration pulls teachers from behind the walls of their classrooms to interface with other educators. They are able to share ideas and solve problems. They can work to develop new products like courses and curriculum. They can, through communication and support, develop a renewed sense of purpose and

belonging to their chosen profession. They do this by personal choice, according to personal need rather than because of mandate. Ultimately, the beauty of teacher collaboration is as a professional development tool empowering teachers to close in ranks and tackle professional challenges they deem important, together.

The benefits of teacher collaboration are rather compelling but one might wonder how they can develop better connections with other teachers.

1. Know your professional needs and goals! Engaging in private reflection helps you to identify those things you might need in order to be successful. Once you have a clear sense of where you are and where you are headed, you can engage in conversation with other teachers to discover their goals! Those common needs and goals can then be addressed as professional development opportunities you can begin to address together.
2. Take advantage of idea sharing sessions at professional development meetings. Rather than

“Teacher collaboration tends to encourage teachers to remain in the profession....The phenomenon happens when teachers with common history or culture engage together in experiences toward reaching a joint goal.”

- just looking to see what others are doing, contribute by bringing an idea to share. This may be the encouragement another teacher needs to reach out to you!
3. Meet regularly with other agriculture teachers in your area. There is a group of teachers in Modesto, California who gather for breakfast every Friday. The face-time helps them build strong relationships through regular communication, allowing them to share ideas, solve problems, work together on projects and seek support.
 4. Utilize social networking resources like Facebook, Twitter, and the NAAE Communities of Practice feature. These tools can help you reach beyond the confines of your classroom to build relationships with teachers throughout your state and across the country. Are you having trouble teaching a certain concept? Perhaps there is a teacher out there who can provide a fresh perspective! Are you looking to implement certain technical certifications into your program? Perhaps another teacher would like to do the same... and would like to work through the process together. The possibilities are endless.
 5. Sites like Google (<http://www.google.com>) have a myriad of tools which can allow teachers to work collaboratively on projects, such as curriculum development, without the constraints of time and space. The Google Docs feature permits many individuals the chance to work on the same document, regardless of where they are located, or when they are available to work. Delicious (<http://delicious.com>) is a phenomenal site for sharing online resources with others who have similar interests. Do you know of a

- great curriculum website or perhaps an online distributor of classroom or shop supplies? Use this social bookmarking tool to share the information with others who have a similar need!
6. Encourage others to perpetuate the idea of teacher collaboration throughout the profession! Become an active, dues-paying member of your professional association and participate in its activities. Encourage the leadership to build opportunities for informal dialogue and interaction among the members during formal meetings. This provides a space for connections to be formed which may lead to future teacher collaborations. Just as powerful, encourage the university teacher education programs to create a collaborative environment in their classes so new teachers emerge ready and willing to work with others in the profession.
 7. Challenge others to take advantage of opportunities for further learning with you! Is there an industry education program or an advanced degree program you would like to complete but you are feeling apprehensive about going it alone? Ask others if they are interested in enrolling with you. Establishing a cohort situation can help spur motivation, creativity, and commitment. Plus, it is just fun to learn with friends!

Rather than give up in the face of adversity, teachers who collaborate with other educators find a renewed sense of professional commitment and greater career satisfaction (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). This empowerment places more control in their hands. They can shape the complexion of their careers by banding together with

others who wish to surpass similar challenges and push themselves to grow in ways beyond what they thought possible. These benefits translate into strong teachers and a strong profession. **Behold, the power of teacher collaboration!**

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Continued from page 4...

students we face each day, may be the most important characteristic.

Regardless of our role in Team Agricultural Education, as middle school or high school teachers, state staff, FFA Alumni, community leaders, or teacher educators we must recognize the critical need for a collaborative effort in bringing the best and brightest to the teaching profession. Teacher recruitment and retention is truly a grassroots effort requiring a commitment from all. In the middle school and high school classroom, students may never have considered the personal satisfaction derived from teaching. Agriculture teachers should take advantage of any chance to explicitly share with their students the numerous intrinsic benefits associated with the profession. Veteran teachers can also reach out to beginning teachers and provide mentorship and advice that is not commonly available in an isolated teaching environment.

Teacher educators have a responsibility to support undergraduate and graduate students in pursuit of teacher certification by delivering a relevant and engaging teacher education program that provides students with ample opportunities for classroom teaching, observation, and building rapport with others in the profession. Teacher educators and cooperating teachers should be mindful of the critical importance of the student teaching experience. For many Agricultural Education majors, this capstone experience in their education serves as the “tipping point” for their ultimate decision regarding entry to the profession. Each of us can play a role in helping pre-service teachers see how they may fit within the profession.

Teacher educators and state staff can be an essential part of the support system for new teachers. Activities ranging from beginning teacher workshops to a school site visit to a call on the phone can assist in the collaborative mentoring effort for beginning teachers. Through recognizing the diverse talents that contribute to teacher success and implementing recruitment and retention efforts through a variety of sources, we can all help in securing the future of agricultural education.

So what will it take to bring the best and brightest to our profession? It will take a collective effort from all members of the Agricultural Education family. Each of us needs to develop the mind-set that the future of our profession is dependent upon our current efforts to identify and encourage talented young people to consider the many rewards of our profession, and to then enter, grow and remain in our profession. Finally it may also require that we rethink what it means to be one of the “best and brightest.” The new generation of Agriculture teachers may very well look, act and think differently than generations past. If we are to reverse the reports and statistics with which we have become all too familiar regarding teacher shortages, it will take all of us to bring the best and brightest to our profession.

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Texting to Teaching: *Reaching the Millennial Generation*

By Steven Rocca

This past fall I had lunch with a group of teachers at a regional meeting of our state's agricultural teacher association. Around the table sat teachers with a range of teaching experience that spanned the entire career spectrum -- a few years to a few decades. The conversation at the table was pretty typical, the usual, "How are things going at your school?" This was followed by everyone's own rendition of *the good, the bad and the ugly*. A very interesting topic of

conversation emerged and remained in the back of my mind. You see, one of the teachers at the table was nearing retirement, so the conversation shifted to a discussion about the difficulty their department would have in replacing that teacher. The ongoing shortage of agriculture teachers in our state was certainly a concern on everyone's mind. While we discussed the current efforts being made to recruit more potential teachers into our profession a comment was made that would later provide the motivation for this article. From the mouth of the most experienced member of our group came something like this, "I have a hard time en-

couraging my students to teach agriculture given the kind of students we have today." The teacher continued by supporting this statement with some of the negatively perceived characteristics he observes in our current generation of students. He mentioned that kids today are disrespectful and all they want to do is use their cell phones, listen to their iPods and send text messages. I have to admit, at the time, the argument did seem to have merit. Through personal experience and observations of my student teachers, I'm quite familiar with the challenges teachers face when trying to engage agriculture students in the learning process. With all the electronic information and social networking opportunities students have at their fingertips, how do you compete for their attention and keep them engaged in the lesson at hand? It certainly demands a great deal of effort and expertise to reach today's secondary agriculture students and keep them actively engaged. After giving it some thought on my drive home, I had a revelation. Who better to reach this generation of students and teach them in a way that suits their learning preferences than students from the very same generation, one commonly referred to as the "Millennial Generation."

Who are the Millennials?

Millennials are young people who came of age in the 1990's when technology was booming and finding its way into our everyday lives. The oldest of this generation, spanning from about 1980 to 2000, are now

Continued on page 12...



26 Hours of Recruitment for the Agricultural Industry

by Michelle Jimenez

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts the Latino population in America will triple in size by the year 2050, ultimately making up 29% of the American population (Passel & Cohn, 2008). The increase of Latino students will also be reflected in the school-age population, which leads to the question: how will we recruit diverse students into agricultural education programs? Esters and Bowen (2004) stressed the importance of recruiting nontraditional students, more specifically, “[the] opportunities to maintain a pipeline of future agriculturalists will depend on the ability of secondary agricultural education programs to attract students from nontraditional backgrounds” (p. 25).

As a “nontraditional” student, I understand the importance of recruiting underrepresented student groups. I am Mexican American with a limited background in agriculture. I was raised in a predominantly Latino community. Soledad, California - my hometown-- is located in the “Salad Bowl of the World,” the Salinas Valley. Our community takes pride in our local Mission, the Pinnacles (a national park), and our rather new high school, which was established in 1999. Before entering high school, my perceptions of FFA and agriculture were different than they are now. I knew an organization

called FFA existed and that “FFA people” raised pigs for fairs and wore Wranglers and boots – little did I know how this organization would change my perceptions!

“I knew an organization called FFA existed and that “FFA people” raised pigs for fairs and wore Wranglers and boots--little did I know how this organization would change my perceptions!”

When the high school guidance counselors came to sign my peers and me up for freshmen classes at the end of 8th grade, I decided to look past my perception of FFA and signed up for an agriculture class. I vividly remember being the

only student in my history honors class to sign up for an agriculture class. Being the only one of thirty students to sign up for agriculture was extremely out of character for me because I was shy and often felt comfort in being in the majority. In addition to the daily curriculum, the agriculture program challenged me to become a leader. I was quickly won over by the welcoming and supportive atmosphere within the agricultural classroom. I noticed my two agriculture educators, Ms. Richmond and Mrs. Ramirez, spent a lot of time after school helping students with public speaking contests and supervised agriculture experience projects. The encouragement and motivation from my agriculture teachers inspired me to get involved with the Best Informed Greenhand (B.I.G.) contest.

Our team, composed of seven females and one male, spent a great deal of time studying for the contest. It was also a time to develop friendships. While at the sectional B.I.G. contest, our advisors told us that we weren’t allowed to sit by each other, rather we were encouraged to meet people from different FFA programs. Building relationships was emphasized in our agriculture program. Similarly, establishing new relationships is very valuable to the Latino community. Within

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preparing to graduate from college and enter their chosen professions. To help understand the Millennials, you must consider the world they have grown up in. These students don't remember having heard a telephone actually "ring." They have always been able to get cash from an ATM machine. Their primary source of news is the internet. And for the big one, the Kennedy tragedy for them is a plane crash, not a presidential assassination. Considering the many differences that exist, it really isn't hard to understand why those of us from Generation X and the Baby Boomers find it difficult to relate to the Millennials.

Fortunately for us, encouraging students to join the profession is about more than understanding why your students send you a text message rather than walking into the next room to ask a question. Regardless of whether you can text, instant message, video chat, tweet, blog, MySpace, Facebook...or not, the message is clear, the future of agricultural education lies in those young people in your classes. They *are* the next generation of agriculture teachers. We need to identify those students who have a passion for agriculture and have the desire to serve by teaching. We must nurture, encourage and support these individuals as they consider and progress towards a possible career in agricultural education.

You can make a difference.

You may be asking yourself, "Why is it my responsibility to help recruit new teachers?" Well, based on what I have learned, there is no better person to identify and influence students with the potential to be the next generation

of agriculture educators than their own agriculture teachers. In fact, according to a study completed with students in our college, secondary agriculture teachers were the most influential people in our students' college decision-making process. Agriculture teachers even ranked higher than the students' own parents! This is an important piece of information given that all the literature related to students' college decisions tells us that parents have the greatest influence on the decisions of their son or daughter.

So, apparently it really doesn't matter if you understand the current generation or not; the facts are, they respect you, they value your advice and most of all you have a tremendous impact on their decisions. As agriculture teachers, we need to take the opportunity to serve as role models, to inspire students and demonstrate to them just how honorable it is to serve a community and its students as an agriculture educator. Very few professions can say that they have the opportunity to encourage large numbers of young people each day to consider a career in their field. Secondary agriculture teachers have that very opportunity and with it comes the potential to make a positive impact by guiding the next generation's best and brightest into our profession. Granted this is not an easy task, but you can assist in the effort by providing students with a quality agricultural education program and by serving as an advocate for our profession and the excellent career opportunities it provides. The next time you speak with one of your students who has the potential to become an agriculture teacher, please discuss your profession in a positive light. Sometimes we

tend to only share the difficulties of our job without realizing the negative picture it paints for a prospective agricultural education teacher. We all chose to enter agricultural education and remain in the profession for good reason. Let's make sure that we take time to have a conversation with our students and tell them of the many rewards that come with a career in agricultural education. Hey, here's a thought, try speaking to them in their generation's lingo. Identify a couple of your best and brightest and send *them* a text message -

**i tnk ud B a gr8 ag
teachR!**



Steven Rocca is an Assistant Professor of Agricultural Education at California State University, Fresno.

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a month of being enrolled in my agriculture class my perception of FFA and agriculture changed. I realized that FFA was more than “cows and plows”; it was about developing friendships, learning about agriculture, and becoming a leader. In addition, the professional rapport I built with my agriculture teachers made me feel a sense of belonging and ultimately motivated me to take additional agriculture courses throughout high school. Agricultural education shaped my future plans in life and gave me a new love and passion for FFA and the agriculture industry.

During my junior year of high school, the possibility of future involvement in the agriculture industry started to seem more of a reality. I attended a program called 26 Hours of Science and Technology in Agriculture sponsored by Latinos in Agriculture, a student organization at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. The college was an hour and a half south of my hometown. Seventy-nine other high school students and I had the opportunity to experience college life for 26 hours. We attended multiple workshops including my favorites - a soil workshop and a dairy workshop. By interacting with successful Latino college students, I saw that I had the opportunity to become a Cal Poly student myself and major in an agriculture-related field. I enjoyed interacting with professors from the different agriculture departments and I loved going downtown for dinner at the local Farmers Market. After my experience at Cal Poly, I came home with a new career choice; I wanted to become an agriculture teacher.

I was thrilled and even emotional when I got my acceptance letter to Cal Poly. I knew my dream of obtaining

a degree in agriculture was now possible. When I arrived at Cal Poly, I joined Latinos In Agriculture (LIA), which sponsored the 26 Hours event I had attended three years before. Knowing how important 26 Hours was to me, I quickly volunteered to serve on the committee for the event. The purpose of this annual event is to host approximately 100 junior and senior minority students from several high schools across the state. It started as a senior project, and the program recently celebrated its 20th year in March. Participants have the opportunity to attend various workshops taught by professors in different departments at Cal Poly. This year workshops included agriculture communication, ornamental horticulture, meats and a dairy workshop. All are hosted by Cal Poly professors and students. Through the workshops and meals, students begin building relationships with other attendees, agriculture professors, and Cal Poly students. They are welcomed by our Dean of Agriculture, experience a “Chemistry Magic” show, and hear a motivating speech by a Latino in Agriculture graduate student. The experience is unique and many students find themselves with new friendships, an interest in Cal Poly, and a different perception about the agriculture careers after attending 26 Hours.

A program like 26 Hours addresses misconceptions about the agriculture industry and helps build relationships among high school students, college students, high school teachers, and university faculty members. Programs like this should be implemented on other college campuses because it can increase enrollment numbers of nontraditional students. From my experience, I can say that 26 Hours exposed me to a world of agricultural opportunities and was

a major factor in why I selected Cal Poly and a career in agricultural education. Each agriculture college campus has the same opportunity as Cal Poly to host a program that will expose “nontraditional” students to agriculture and higher education. As agricultural education professionals, I challenge you to work with your favorite college of agriculture and volunteer to help build a similar program. It is up to all of us to make sure all students have a clear understanding of the agriculture industry and the career opportunities it presents. The future of your own profession depends on your action.

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Using Guest Speakers & Internships to Prepare Students for Agricultural Careers

by Wendy Warner & Shannon Washburn

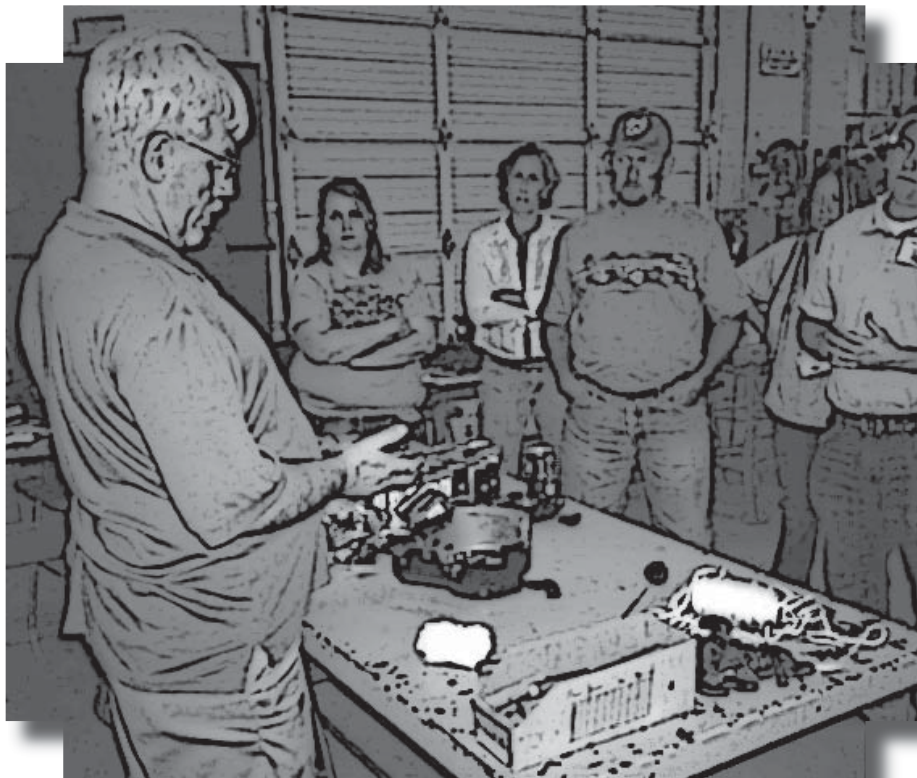
Early in my teaching career, I was surrounded by a roomful of potential students and parents. I had just finished highlighting the agriscience curriculum, discussing the benefits of FFA, and describing the importance of SAE. At the conclusion of my presentation, a parent raised her hand and asked, "What kind of agriculture career could my child pursue?" At that moment, I realized the challenges of teaching in an urban setting. In my small, rural hometown in Ohio, the acres of farmland that surrounded our homes and school were evidence of the traditional careers in agriculture that my classmates and I might pursue upon graduation from high school or college. Off the top of my head, I couldn't think of any specific examples of agriculture careers in the community in which I taught north of Orlando beyond the landscapers responsible for maintaining the school grounds. When thinking about Orlando, I could identify a few careers in agriculture, such as the foliage industry and turfgrass industry, but I quickly realized that I needed to do my homework on the many agricultural careers that my students could pursue in Orange County, Florida.

I took the advice given to many novice agriculture teachers

and began to acquaint myself with agricultural businesses around the county. Initially, I began by attending the meetings of agriculture organizations such as the local chapter of the Florida Nurseryman and Growers Association and the Orange County Farm Bureau. I used these opportunities to gain information for my curriculum and to identify guest speakers for my classes. Once the members of the organization learned more about my program offerings, they provided me with names of additional contacts that would be excellent sources of guest speakers and field trips.

My school district encouraged the inclusion of guest speakers in

all classrooms by sponsoring an event called Teach-In. During this county-wide event, individuals from around the county served as guest teachers and provided students with information about their career fields. Guest teachers in my classroom had occupations in fields ranging from aquaculture to natural resources to agribusiness. Using this idea, a similar event could be planned specific to agricultural careers. After obtaining an agreement to participate from the curriculum teachers and setting a date, individuals can be contacted and invited to take part in this activity. The list below provides just a few suggestions of potential participants that could be invited for core curriculum classes:



Math – accountant, landscape architect, credit analyst

Science – food scientist, entomologist

Social Studies – regional planner, a local agriculturalist could share how agriculture in the area has changed over time

Language Arts – agriculture journalist, radio/television broadcaster

While my students and I learned a lot from the guest speakers who were invited to my classes, the details of the daily responsibilities of their respective careers often remained unclear. To provide the opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of agricultural careers, teacher and student internships were developed.

Due to my students' interest in possible careers in the life sciences, my curriculum had a strong emphasis on agriscience. My classroom contained a sterile room with a fume hood so students could propagate plants using tissue culture. To learn more about how a commercial plant tissue culture facility operated, I was able to arrange for a two-day internship. I spent approximately 3 ½ hours in each of the four major areas of the company. I had the chance to learn how to mix growing media, perform tissue culture in the propagation area, shadow the director of research and development, and transplant 3-5 inch plants into cell packs while in the production area. Not only did this internship expose me to an agricultural industry with which I was unfamiliar, I was also able to incorporate what I had learned into my lessons on plant tissue culture.

Not only can internships can provide agriculture teachers with valuable experience in the rapidly changing

agriculture industry, but high school students can gain important career experience through internships. At the high school where I taught, every senior student was required to complete an internship. Students could select to complete either a paid or non-paid internship and could be enrolled in the internship class for 1-4 periods. For each period of enrollment, students were required to complete five internship hours per week. Some on-campus internship experiences were offered in the event that a student did not have suitable transportation to an off-campus location. For example, one of my students was responsible for managing all the recruiting efforts that the agriculture program conducted over the course of the year. She was responsible for creating a recruitment presentation, sending information to the 28 middle schools in the county, arranging recruiting visits, and maintaining follow-up contacts with interested students. Another student completed an internship in the Viticulture Research Program at a local research station which was a division of University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences. He assisted with research on the development of disease resistant grapevines using various methods, including conventional breeding and genetic engineering.

Before the students could begin their internship, an agreement had to be signed by the student, a legal guardian, and the internship supervisor. Twice a semester, the employer was asked to complete an evaluation of the intern. The student was assessed using the following categories: appearance, flexibility, attendance, discretion, maturity, sensitivity, independence, dependability, and attitude. Also, the internship coordinator made a site visit once a semester to observe a

student during their internship and meet with the internship supervisor.

In addition to meeting the internship requirements, each student was enrolled in an internship course. During this course, students learned about employability skills and were responsible for creating and maintaining a portfolio detailing their internship. Students also had the opportunity to share specific experiences from their internship with their peers and reflect on these experiences both individually and as a class. This experiential learning activity helped students prepare for situations that they might encounter in their internship and in their future careers.

In recognition of all the internship supervisors, a recognition banquet was held at the conclusion of the school year. Each student prepared a five minute presentation highlighting what they had learned over the course of the internship. When the sponsors realized how much they had contributed to the career preparation of high school students, they were excited about the opportunity to have more student interns in the future. After graduation, several students continued as full-time or part-time employees at their internship sites.

During an open house two years later, a parent asked me, "What kind of agriculture career could my child pursue?" Not only could I describe the wide range of careers available in the Orange County area, I could also explain how the inclusion of guest speakers into the curriculum and the completion of a year-long internship helped prepare the students for future careers in agriculture. We often forget

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Everyday Miracles

Way down in the south-east tip of Louisiana there is a school we keep hearing about. An area of long suffering through financial difficulties, regular hurricanes, and racial tensions; the local students and teachers should complain and seek help to improve their own situations--instead they create miracles.

Ponchatoula Agricultural Education and FFA Chapter is home to a philosophy of helping. Helping your neighbors when disaster strikes, reaching out to those with special needs, helping each other reach new levels of achievement, collecting for those less fortunate, reaching across county lines, state boundaries and indeed around the world--this program is the flagship for service learning and the Golden Rule.

Recently in "Making A Difference," Alice Dubois states that she and co-teacher, Donna Winborn, are "walking, talking marketing tools for Ag Ed." I would describe them as Ambassadors for Humanity. They are preparing new generations of

citizens to be both accepting and appreciative of each other's differences and looking for ways to reach out to the world. Below are just a few of the activities held by the Ponchatoula FFA Chapter recently:

- Special Olympics
- Teacher Appreciation Luncheon
- We've Got Your Back Hurricane Relief Project
- Adopt-a-Family
- Toys for Tots
- Horizon House
- Project Iraq
- Annual FFA Diversity Conference--hosted for their Parish and Area.
- Dog Therapy Program for Kids with Disabilities
- ...and the list goes on.

Is Ponchatoula FFA/Ag Ed Program really *SO* much more humane than other programs? I don't think so. They are just very good at identifying needs and taking steps to address those needs.

Interesting people in general, including students, tend to step up to the expectations of others. In Ponchatoula students are treated with respect and enthusiasm. In return, they seek ways to do the same for others.

Helping a child that has never been able to have a pet learn to groom a dog and consequently find a new friend is one example. Developing the patience needed to provide such opportunities requires



planning and preparation. Sounds like what most teachers do naturally.

I have been involved with Agricultural Education and the FFA for over 25 years. In all that time I noticed the one thing we are not very good at is blowing our own horn. Few papers in American miss a publication with out reference to the local athletic programs, yet ag programs tend to think they are doing wonders if they are mentioned in the paper once a month. Over time we have improved, but until Agricultural Education / FFA become household words in every home in America, our job is not done.

Congratulations Alice and Donna! You have a right to be proud of your students and your program. But I believe there are lots of "Ponchatoula" programs out there--and we need to work to make sure EVERYONE else does too!

Make the 2009-2010 school year one that will be remembered for the many outstanding service-learning activities through programs across the country.

*Think about it!
Billye*



Continued from page 15...

the valuable resources we have in our local communities to help us motivate students to pursue agricultural careers. I challenge you to set a goal for yourself on how you can increase the number of guest speakers or local internship opportunities in your program this year.



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THEME ARTICLE

Slap-Chop, ShamWow, & Oxy-Clean: Does Agricultural Education Need an Infomercial?

By Stacy K. Vincent & Kristy Board

Infomercials have become entertaining late night television drama recently as cable networks have begun including these “wonderful”, “well-spoken” salespeople who draw my attention (at least for a few minutes) to the latest wonderful product that weeds my landscape and grills the perfect hamburger. It is a product that I just, “cannot live without”. One morning I began thinking, as I watched the amazing MiracleBlade® cut through bread without a bit of compression, “Does agricultural education need an infomercial in order to attract the best and brightest into the profession?”

The thought did attract some attention (and possibly a giggle), but I soon realized that we have better resources and skills than an infomercial to attract the best and brightest into the profession. Researchers in the agricultural education profession have already informed us that a teacher is one of the leading individuals in encouraging students to pursue a degree. If this is the case, then why are we not more successfully drawing our “best” and “brightest” to the teaching profession? Do we believe that the 4.0, valedictorian is “too smart” for agriculture and a role in the medical field is better suited for them? I certainly hope not! This spring I received the opportunity to attend the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related

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Sciences (MANRRS) Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana. I spoke with several of the best and brightest African-American and Latino-American agriculture majors in the nation. These students were excited about the teaching profession and provided me with a concept that our profession may find useful as we begin to analyze our recruitment strategies. From our conversations, I created a conceptual model (pictured below) for recruiting students into the agricultural education profession.

and place my old ag teacher's hat on and word this in layman's terms with the following examples: My little niece wants to be a professional horse rider (don't know if that exists, but I won't break her four year old heart for the world) because she fell in love with horses at an early, early age. Her passion for horses is noticed (externally) in her bedroom, which reflects the perceived thoughts of what her world of professional horse riding would look like. However, Ryan and Deci's (2000) description of intrinsic

until I was a junior in college, serving as a chaperone for my former FFA advisor at the National FFA Convention. At the convention, I identified with the passions and connections that raised my internal values to become a teacher. I realize that I am not everyone, which is why I bring you back to the MANRRS students. They brought to my attention that the rise of their external value is also beneficial in recruiting. The different avenues the industry represents changes the perceived thoughts of the word, "agriculture". In addition, the students realized a degree in agricultural education did not lead them down a one-way street, rather toward a plethora of different highways for advancement. For example, look at the statement provided by one of the conference attendees.

"I ultimately see myself in the agricultural education field for a good five years and ultimately getting my masters in administration and becoming a principal."

Someone educated this student and allowed her to understand she could teach agricultural education and then advance to other positions. External and internal values must be raised for the best and brightest students to be attracted to the profession. However, we cannot raise those values until barriers are overcome through literacy, connection with the culture, and a positive relationship with the student. Agriculture teachers do a tremendous job building relationships with their students and (to some extent) with the culture of the community.

However, the perception of a typical agriculture education classroom and FFA officer team is homogenous white students with a love of country music and four-wheel drive

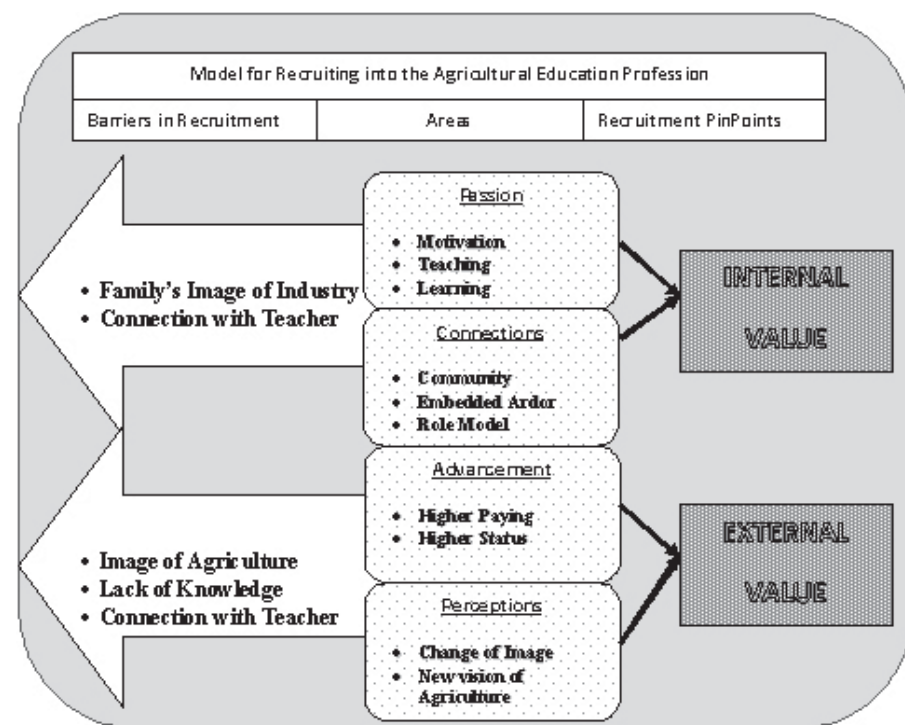


Figure 1

I can't change it, but the heading for the left column above should be Barriers to Recruitment or simply Recruitment Barriers.

In the model above, an emphasis made is in two key recruitment pinpoints. Our industry must raise students' internal and external values in order to persuade them into the profession. Let me stray from the technical, research jargon

motivation informs me that my niece is too young for me to understand what she is thinking internally.

Therefore, let us move forward to high school or college. At this age, students *begin* understanding the true value of self-worth. My brother identified a self-worth in college to become an attorney because of internal hatred for baling hay and cutting tobacco. I did not realize my internal value was my passion for helping motivate young adults



pickup trucks. Does this image create a barrier for our profession as to who can be successful?

One intriguing aspect to recruiting the best and brightest is by allowing academics to lead us toward these individuals versus FFA involvement only. I realize that many of our involved FFA members are also scholastically the strongest, but do these students realize they are coming to college to become a teacher first, then an advisor? I remember listening to students who were discussing their excitement and goals once they completed their degree in agricultural education. One of the students started the conversation by saying, "I cannot wait to train CDE teams!" This led to numerous stories and pride of who had the best FFA chapter. In my mind, I began to think of the agriculture teacher's creed that never mentions the role of an FFA advisor in its descriptive doctrine.

Throughout the United States, many universities are creating programs that provide high school students with an opportunity to

understand the entire scope of a degree in agricultural education. At a small university in western Kentucky, high school students across the country are enrolling in a 3-hour credit course that

evaluates their teaching performance and overall understanding of this occupation, helping them in making the decision prior to college (Vincent, 2007). Kristy Board, lecturer at Murray State University and lead instructor of the course, provided an additional explanation:

Introduction to Agricultural Education, Communication and Leadership (AED 104) is intended to serve as a bridge class between high school agricultural education programs and collegiate level teacher education courses. This course has provided students with increased insight into the profession by examining the roles, responsibilities and challenges that accompany the areas of education, leadership and communication. Additionally, the professional qualities and expectations of educators are explored. To be eligible to enroll in the course students are required to complete an admissions application to Murray State, be a junior or senior in high school, and submit ACT scores and transcript. Those who complete the course receive three elective credit hours, which is transferable to any university. Questions such as, "What is agricultural education" and "What defines a great teacher" are common to all who enter an agriculture teacher education program. The curriculum

for this course encourages students to become familiar with designing lessons, reading literature related to the profession, and allows them to take on a small role as an agriculture instructor. Students work independently with the university instructor via the web.

One of the most prominent challenges our profession faces is diversity. Students in this course are encouraged to analyze how agricultural education can adapt to an increasingly diverse world through the completion of a diversity project. The main goal of the project is to encourage students to promote diversity in their agriculture program. It is the responsibility of the student to determine the type of diversity needed. Through this project, students have the opportunity to increase agriculture awareness not just in their own program, but also throughout the school and community.

Many institutions are working diligently to recruit the best and brightest to the profession. With the implementation of programs such as the AED 104 course at Murray State University, the Bridge Project at the University of Idaho (Swan, 2009) and the MANRRS Convention, students have the opportunity to gain experience in the profession. However, spreading the word of these wonderful experiences may need the help of an infomercial expert like Billy Mays if each of us as members of the Agricultural Education family do not rise to the challenge to spread the word ourselves.

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Following in Our Footsteps

by Lee Weis

In 24 years of teaching, I have experienced many personal accomplishments. Yet, the accomplishment that has had the biggest impact on Agricultural Education was the great pleasure of teaching five students who have chosen to make teaching agriculture their life's career. Why have these five chosen to carry the torch of instructing students about the food and fiber industry? I would like to think part of the reason they chose to teach was because of something I instilled in them. Was it the family atmosphere I tried to create? Was it the lessons I taught, not just about agriculture, but also about life and its various lessons? Could it have been our many travels and the sites we visited? Was it the many meals we ate and celebrated our accomplishments over? Maybe it was the various Career Development Events we prepared for and had success at? I would like to think it was a combination of the many activities my students and I had the opportunity to share with each other. We as agriculture instructors hold the future of our students in our hands. What we do for and with our students has a major impact on them, both in the present and in the future.. Sometimes that future is following in our footsteps. What a great honor to have students who want to be a professional like you. What a great responsibility it is to serve as a role model for the next gen-

eration of agriculture teachers.

What we impart to our students will be imparted to their students and so on. We must understand that what we do each day will be felt by our profession for many years to come. If our daily instructional decisions are filled with passion and enthusiasm for what we do and the people and industry we serve, it is inevitable that our students who become teachers will seek to teach and inspire in a similar manner.

So, what did I do that inspired my students to become agriculture teachers? I wish I knew, so I could travel the country advising college programs on how to increase agriculture teacher numbers and end the teacher shortage. Kidding aside, I believe it is simple why my students have chosen to become agriculture instructors. I loved being their teacher. I enjoyed teaching about the world of agriculture. What you share about your career is what is remembered. If you heard endless complaints about the hours, the pay, or the red tape of your job, would you be excited about being you? Shouldn't teaching agriculture and being an FFA advisor be a way of life not simply a job? Showing our students our passion for our career is a critical step in passing the torch to the next generation of Agriculture Teachers. We must show our love and dedication to our profession and pass it on to our students. When those bad days oc-



cur or something just does not go as planned, we must find a sounding board. Let's not allow our sounding board to be our students simply because they are a captive audience. Teaching agriculture is a rewarding career; we must preserve its future by motivating the next generation to take our place with dedication and enthusiasm.

Being flexible is a great tool that we as agriculture teachers must learn. I have had the good fortune of teaching at two schools during my career. Each school is completely different from the other. One program was a very traditional pro-

gram with its roots going back over seventy years. The other program's roots only go back slightly over a decade. The younger program is non-traditional in the sense that it does not have an agricultural mechanics program like many in my state, but instead emphasizes Food Science and Agriculture Science.

In moving to my current school, I learned very quickly that I could not bring my past with me but needed to develop new lessons to meet the needs of my students, school and community. The younger program has roots in agriculture, but the community is more of a bedroom community for a factory-oriented urban area. I realized rapidly that if I was to have a full-time career, I needed to develop a curriculum that would interest my students and prepare them for their futures. I developed a curriculum around food sciences and biotechnology because students will always be consumers, but also because food science offers a variety of career choices in our area. It is my hope that the energy and enthusiasm I exert helping my students prepare for the future will inspire young people not only to consider careers in food science, but also to think about doing what I do.

We as Agriculture Teachers need to keep changing as we progress through our careers. Early in our careers, we teach the basics and FFA. We fall back on our strengths and our comforts. We must progress as we become confident in our abilities. This means that we as experienced teachers need to leave our comfort zones and develop new curricula and update those areas we teach. We need to advance our knowledge of our lessons and research new and exciting areas in which our students are interested and those that appeal to

the ever-changing student population.

Are we as agriculture teachers changing as fast as our student population? Are we keeping up with the new trends? We must if we are going to keep our students interested in what we teach as well as keeping the seats filled in our classrooms. We need to keep up with the trends in education, agriculture, technology, and our student's culture. If we settle for annually teaching the same way as well as the same thing, our students will not be motivated to be a part of our programs. That would be a major disservice to our students, school, community, and profession. So in closing, we as teachers must show affection for our profession and we must not settle for the same thing year after year. We need to be excited and show it. The future of our profession is in our hands and we must get everyone involved so the profession is around for years to come.



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Want to be an Ag Teacher???

by Mike Buckley

SAY.....Have you ever considered being an Ag teacher? Youthful indiscretion got the better of me during my first attempt to complete my degree in Agriculture Education. After several years of work I didn't particularly enjoy, I went back to school at the age of 33, married with two children and two mortgages, and a different outlook on life! School was viewed as my new job, and with my new-found motivation, I completed 49 credit hours in 11 months. I loved

my job then and I love my job now!

My alarm is set for 5:45AM although I rarely need it because I am usually up by 5AM. I love my job! One of the things I love about my work is helping former students decide whether teaching is the career for them. In my 14 years of teaching, six students who have come through our Agriscience program at Southeast High School in Manatee County Florida have gone on to earn a Bachelors Degree in education. Four of these students majored in Agricultural Education and two in Elementary Education. Five out

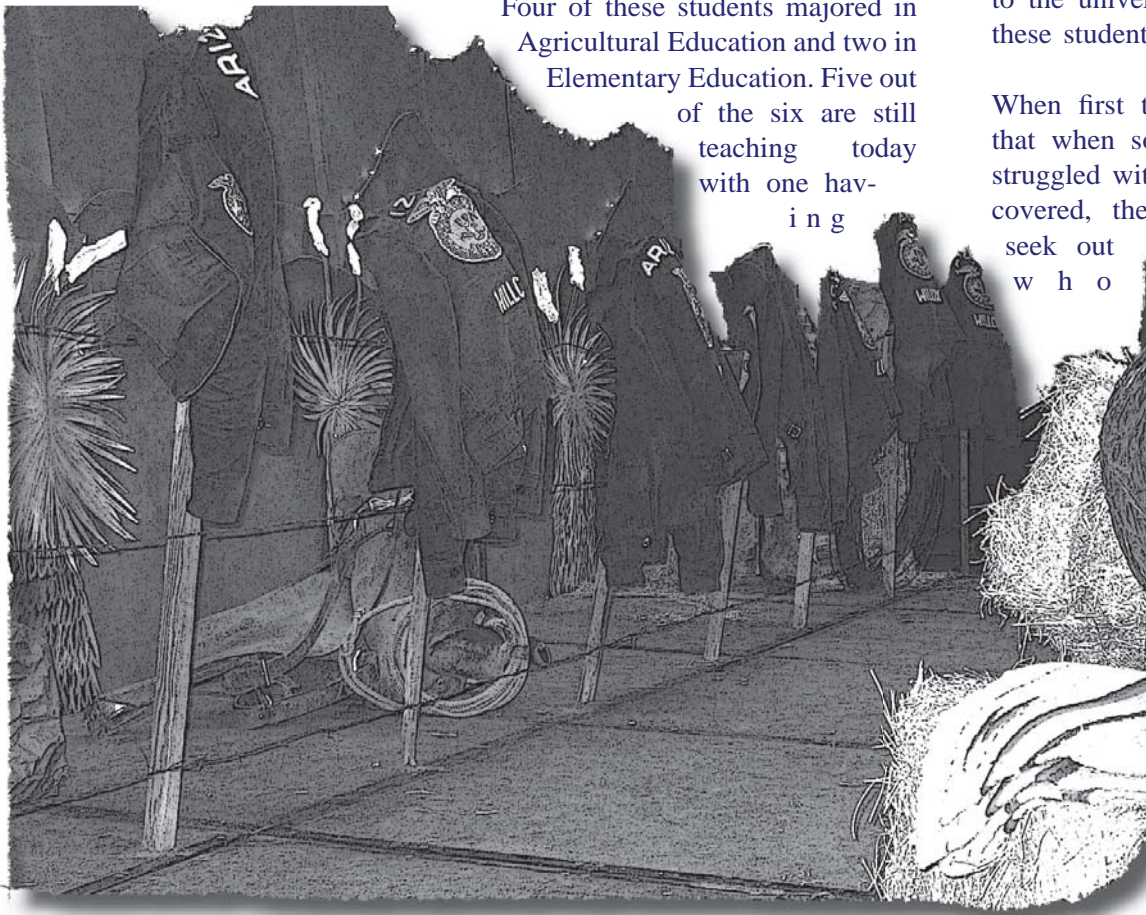
of the six are still teaching today with one having

finished their fourth year of teaching students in the Agriculture field.

In addition to supporting my former Southeast students, I believe it is also beneficial to our profession when I support and encourage Agricultural Education students from other schools in our area. I am proud to say I have worked closely with two students from other schools in our district with their transition from the local community college to the university level. Both of these students are teachers today.

When first teaching, I observed that when some of the students struggled with the material being covered, they would invariably seek out another student who could explain it to them in a different manner than my own. While some teachers may take offense to

Retiring officer jackets--moving toward a teaching career??



this happening in their classroom, I chose to look at it from another angle. *Why should I care where the assistance comes from as long as that struggling student is able to grasp the concept?* This after all, is the goal of a teacher.

As time went on and the same situation would present itself, I enlisted the help of those one or two students whom struggling students went to when they didn't understand something. I would call them up to the front of the room and ask them to explain the concepts or present the material to the class. Some of these students felt comfortable doing this and some did not. This is an invaluable teaching strategy and a way to plant the seed, "say..... have you ever considered being an Ag teacher?"

As a new teacher training a CDE team, I employed this same practice. As most instructors are aware you have some returning members from last year's team. It can be a challenge when you are presenting material that half of the team already knows. I employed the same strategy and had the returning members help teach the material to the new team members. Being ultimately responsible, we had periodic evaluations to ensure that the members were staying on track and meeting the goals that were set for each CDE team. Outside of the classroom setting, this is another avenue for some students to demonstrate their "gift of teaching" as well as another opportunity for me to plant the seed "say..... have you ever considered being an Ag teacher?"

As Agriculture Educators, we have an advantage over most teachers in that we might have many of our students for four years, where others may have a student for just one semester or perhaps one year. Dur-

ing our time with students, a bond can develop that most teachers may never have. I encourage my former students to stay in touch with me because I have a sincere interest on in what they are doing. During their high school years, we spent time together outside of school on trips out of town or even out of state such as CDE's or State and National Conventions. Because of this level of involvement, it is only natural that we stay in touch. As Agriculture Educators, sometimes we may be the only motivating force in students' academic or professional careers, and I have found most students want to be able to come back and show you how well they have done. It is during those catch up visits that I try to conduct an informal check to see if they are still on track to reach their goals. If they seem to be encountering some road blocks, I know the University was only a phone call away. We pick up the phone and dial the University and have the student talk directly with an Ag Ed Professor and allow that natural relationship to develop between the former student and the University Professor. This seems to keep them on track. The University Professors are always willing to stay in touch and assist them in course selection and transfer procedures; however, sometimes they may need a connection and that may be the former high school educator.

In working with other Ag Ed Instructors in my county, I've discovered that between the four high school programs, we all had some former students considering becoming an Ag Ed major. An evening was arranged for these students to enjoy a steak dinner and one of the University professors agreed to attend and visit with them in an informal setting so these students could ask questions.

How many of our students walk into a classroom and listen to a teacher complain about their pay or the hours they put in or the meetings they are required to attend, or the paperwork they have to turn in? As well as the unruly students who they must deal with or the parent phone calls that have to be returned. Would anyone find this appealing as a possible career choice and decide they want to spend the money and the years attending college just to feel this way? Are all of these things the realities of the profession? Yes they are, but we have the ability to choose our attitude everyday. How do you think these students would respond if they entered a classroom where everyday the instructor greeted them by saying "Good Morning, great to see you!" I woke up before my alarm clock because I just couldn't wait to get here! **I love my job!**



Mike Buckley teaches Agriculture at Southeast High School in Bradenton, Florida.

Building Relationships to Support the Profession

By Drew Bender & Amy Lukac

The echo of the school bell fills the air, time for class...wait, start class! Only this time you are no longer a student, you are in charge! The first time you step in front of a class of anxious freshmen is a feeling that you will never forget. You still feel a little awkward, and maybe even get mistaken for a student, at worst, a freshman. As beginning teachers we do not just face challenges in the classroom, but we also endure the expectations of being a first year teacher. During the interview process, many new teachers are asked the question, "How will you distinguish your agriculture program from the rest? What do you bring to the program?" So, what DO we really bring to the program? And how can others assist in this effort?

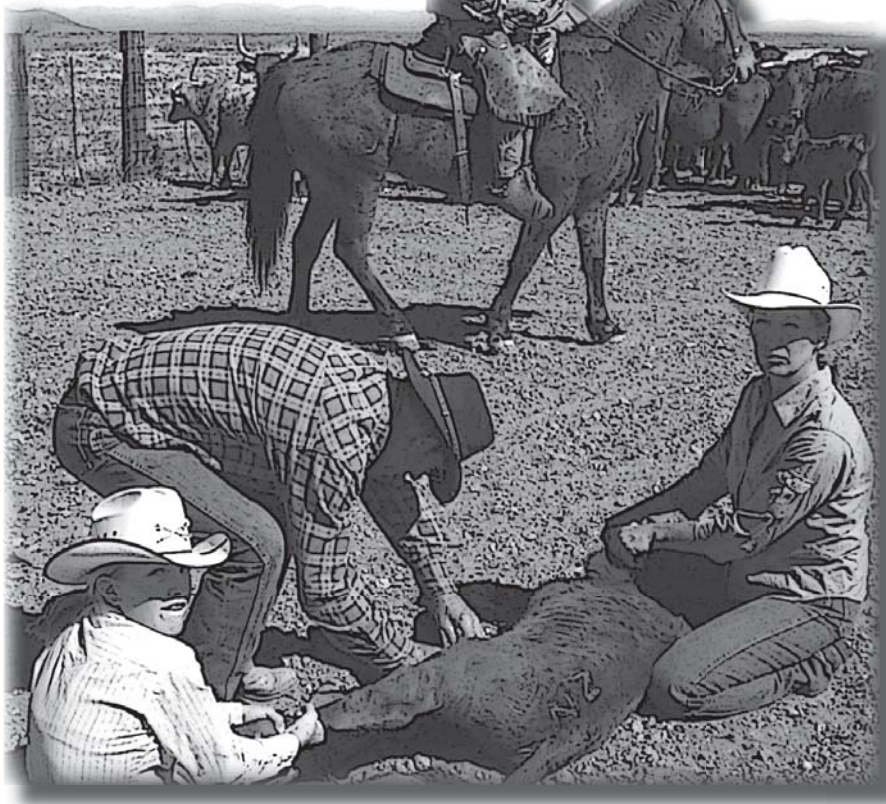
The answer seems easy enough; we bring a youthful energy, fresh ideas, and innovative curricula. Unfortunately it is not always so simple. We have to think beyond the immediate program and consider our potential service to the school and the teaching profession. The chance to engage in lifelong learning and

build rapport with both our novice and experienced colleagues will provide numerous opportunities for personal growth and enhanced contributions to our school and the profession.

During student teaching, a strong bond was formed among members of our student teaching cohort at The Ohio State University. As a collective group of 18, we were thrown out into an ocean of sharks, otherwise known as high school students.

There was comfort in knowing that through the ups and downs, the planned and random, and the questionable or certain, our peers were just a cell phone call away. A quick conversation provided immense help through the stressful student teaching times. There was also a steady stream of emails used to exchange lesson ideas and teaching resources.

With the demands of student teaching, trying to keep up with lesson planning, pro-



gram management, and the always-energetic student, it was easy to become so immersed in our individual world that we forgot about the valuable connections we could establish with veteran colleagues. Yet, taking the time to learn from our experienced mentors provided many benefits. As mentioned in the Making a Difference newsletter, “each generation shares a common set of experiences, ideas, and values – meaning people from different generations often have a different approach to work and their priorities. Being aware of these differences can help people understand one another and work together more effectively” (Theilfoldt & Scheef as cited in DeHoff, 2008).

For many student teachers, the cooperating teacher also served as one of our biggest supporters. Throughout the semester, our mentors offered endless advice, words of encouragement, suggestions for improvement, and a mix of humor to help provide perspective on some of the most stressful situations. We also had the chance to teach our experienced colleagues a new thing or two. To many of our cooperating teachers, we were the technology experts. Occasionally we would make the dinosaur printer function again, fix an e-mail issue, or troubleshoot other various technological mishaps. It was exciting to support the professional growth of veteran teachers by sharing ideas for technology integration, from the use of SMART Boards to podcasts.

The relationships that are initiated between novice and experienced teachers during student teaching serve as the foundation for continued professional growth and career satisfaction. By taking the time to nurture and maintain these friendships, we have the opportunity to learn new things and partner on new ideas that will help our efforts to contribute in our program, our school, our community, and the profession.



Drew Bender and Amy Lukac recently completed their student teaching with The Ohio State University.



All graphics used in this issue are courtesy of the University of Arizona, Department of Agricultural Education.

Who dares to teach must never cease to learn.

*~John Cotton Dana
(1856-1929)*

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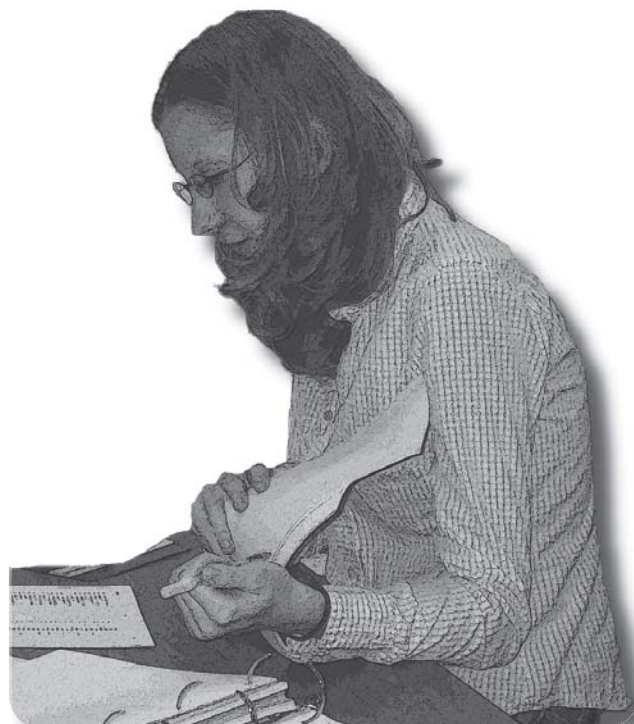
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