Minnesota FFA Announces Top Award Recipients and Elects Leaders

MINNEAPOLIS — (April 30, 2019) The final session of the 90th Minnesota FFA Convention concluded with the election of the six-member state officer team. The newly elected team will serve nearly 11,000 members in Minnesota for one year. They will also spend the next year representing Minnesota, agriculture and agricultural education at state and national levels.

The 2019-2020 Minnesota FFA State Officer Team includes:
- President: Lafe Aarsvold – Plainview Elgin Millville;
- Vice President: Nicholas Potthoff – Martin County West;
- Secretary: Elaine Dorn – Randolph;
- Treasurer: Madilyn Smith – Fillmore Central;
- Reporter: Britton Fuglseth – Fertile Beltrami; and
- Sentinel: Savannah Aanerud – Morris Area.

The state officer candidates were interviewed by a panel of FFA members, agricultural educators and representatives from partnering organizations earlier this week.

Career Development and Leadership Development Events
During the final session, Career Development Events (CDE) and Leadership Development Event (LDE) winners were announced. The top chapters in the state will advance to the national competition in Indianapolis in October. CDEs and LDEs are competitive activities for students to showcase their skills in their respective events. Results will be sent out in early May and remain preliminary until that time.

National Chapter Award
The Eden Valley Watkins FFA Chapter received top honors for the State FFA Chapter Award, sponsored by the Minnesota FFA Foundation. FFA chapters apply for this honor by highlighting
their activities in the categories of student development, chapter development and community development. Chapter applications are reviewed and scored by a series of judges who evaluate innovative ideas and accomplished goals. Recognized chapters included: Chatfield, Deer River, Howard Lake Waverly Winsted, Plainview Elgin Millville, Princeton, Rockford, Sleepy Eye, South Central AgriScience Academy and Springfield.

Session Speakers
During the fifth session Tuesday, April 30, FFA members heard a retiring address titled, “The Power of Inquisition,” from James Mathiowetz, state sentinel from the Belle Plaine FFA chapter.

“We should seek to understand rather than seek to assume,” he said.

Dr. Brian Buhr, University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences dean, spoke during the session, focusing on the University of Minnesota’s legacy of generating great leaders.

“Here at the University of Minnesota, we will encourage you to aspire to be who you want to be,” He said. “You can literally save the world. Aspire to be that person here at the University of Minnesota.”

Grace Taylor, state president, gave her retiring address, “Through the Eyes of Grace,” during the sixth session.

“Many of us strive to be part of something great,” Taylor said, “To make history. To change the world. Sometimes it seems impossible to do, given that we are just one person.

By choosing grace, you can be a part of something greater every day. You can make history in someone’s life and you can change the way people view the world. All of our dreams, all of our goals and all of our greatness start here.”

The keynote speaker during the sixth session was Mike Schultz, a Paralympic Games medalist, extreme athlete and entrepreneur. Schultz won nine X Games gold medals in addition to gold and silver medals at the 2018 Paralympics in PyeongChang, South Korea.

“Don’t stop. Keep charging. Experience as much as you can. Find what you are passionate about,” he said. “Dream big, aspire to be the best and the most productive person you can be. Embrace the challenge. I promise the more you put into it the better it is going to be when you reach it. Go for the gold.”

At his final convention as Minnesota FFA State Advisor, Joel Larsen filled the arena with his words of experience.

“Over 24 years, we have seen the number of agricultural programs and number of teachers grow,” he said. “People ask me, ‘Why agricultural education?’ I believe that simple sentence -- to practice brotherhood, honor agricultural opportunities and responsibilities, and to develop
those qualities of leadership an FFA member should possess explains it all. As I leave my station by the owl, I hope my advice has been based on true knowledge and ripened with wisdom.”

Minnesota FFA Convention highlights and results can be found at mnffa.org

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About Minnesota FFA

FFA is a national organization developing students’ potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education with more than 600,000 members in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The Minnesota FFA Association represents nearly 11,000 members and almost 200 high school chapters across the state. Agricultural education engages students through hands-on learning in the classroom, work-based learning opportunities known as Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects and FFA activities.

You can learn more about the experiences of FFA members and supporters by visiting www.mnffa.org and www.ffa.org.