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FEBRUARY 15-22, 2025



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I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds – achievements won by the present and past generations of agriculturists; in the promise of better days through better ways, even as the better things we now enjoy have come to us from the struggles of former years.

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I believe in leadership from ourselves and respect from others. I believe in my own ability to work efficiently and think clearly, with such knowledge and skill as I can secure, and in the ability of progressive agriculturists to serve our own and the public interest in producing and marketing the product of our toil.

I believe in less dependence on begging and more power in bargaining; in the life abundant and enough honest wealth to help make it so—for others as well as myself; in less need for charity and more of it when needed; in being happy myself and playing square with those whose happiness depends upon me.

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Senior Emily Hopkins showing off a steer at the 2024 Laclede County Fair.



Students learn how to groom a dog in their veterinarian science class.

Lebanon FFA prepares for the future

JACK SILBERBERG
REPORTER@LACLEDERECORD.COM

For Lebanon’s Future Farmers of America chapter, advisor Tommy Inman says that the program never really stops, but there are busier periods than others, such as this spring’s upcoming contest season.

Freshmen arrive on the scene in September and wade into agriculture classes, the first of three pillars the program rests on: classroom instruction, FFA, and Supervised Agricultural Experiences. The program currently has around 250 members, which Inman said is a sign of growth.

“We can tie all those things together and it makes us a well-rounded individual for agriculture,” Inman said.

Inman explained that there were three main pathways: agronomy and plant science, animal science, and mechanics. He said that there has been a 33 percent increase in agriculture mechanics, which he guessed was due to the takeoff of precision equipment in the field and learning curve.

Juniors get their OSHA 10 cards this year, which Inman says will help with job placement. The program also plans to train students on a newly purchased forklift to secure their forklift license. He said the shop has been full of students completing projects.

On the FFA side, freshmen begin earning their Greenhand FFA Degrees and the sophomores their Chapter FFA Degrees in September. State FFA Degree applications and contests begin in the spring.

The contests students choose to participate in depend on their career path. Students this year are competing in events like horse judging, dairy cattle judging, agriculture mechanics and agronomy. These contests are held throughout the state beginning in March, with districts and state competitions in April.

Contest preparation is integrated into classroom instruction, and Inman said that students will be “experts” (for high schoolers) in the field they plan to compete in.

Freshmen officially begin their SAEs in January. Inman said that these can include experiments, careers, and individual businesses. As they progress through high school, they use the skills they learn in the classes to further develop their projects.

The program went on an Ag Industry Tour this fall to explore agriculture outside of Missouri. The group toured feedyards, King Ranch and other parts of Texas. Inman noted the differences in climate as well as land and territory, as ones that impressed themselves upon



students.

FFA degrees are certifications that have different requirements. The Greenhand Degree requires enrollment in FFA and the recitation of the organization’s creed, and the Chapter Degree requires a year in the agriculture and a five minute-minimum presentation in front of their peers.

Other events included basketball and softball tournaments, an ice cream social, and participation in the Laclede County Fair.

To kick off National FFA Week, the Lebanon Chapter has the following schedule: Cedar Ridge Freewill Baptist Church in Long Lane on Sunday, nothing on Monday (no school), a small activity after school Tuesday, Drive Anything but a Car on Wednesday, a FFA-led community dinner on Thursday, and a trip to BigShots in Springfield for students on Friday.

“And then it’ll be contests from there on out,” Inman said.

Since the students run the FFA pillar with Inman and the other instructors in an advisory role, Inman said that the seniors are leaders both in the FFA side as officers and in the classroom, where they set the example.

Hayley Miller, another instructor in the program, reported high activity levels, numbers, and State Degree applications. She noted that the program’s students are involved in a variety of other extracurricular activities and that the students will get to choose what they will make of it.

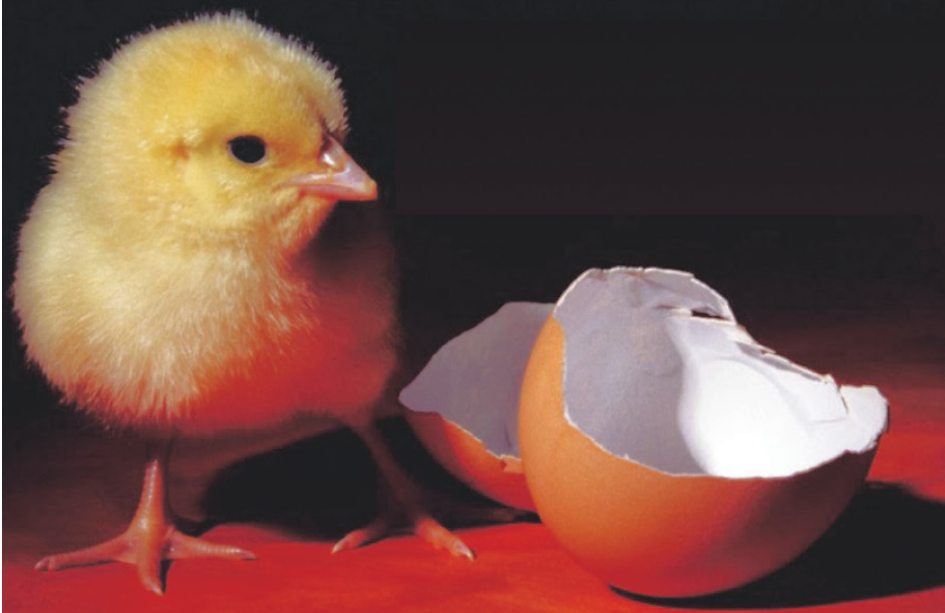
Caleb Falzone is a new instructor at the district as of January and has so far overseen State FFA Degree applications and student projects like those in the shop. Falzone is currently finishing up school at the University of Missouri and reported a smooth transition.

Falzone became an agriculture teacher after seeing the impact they have on their students and the way they can provide students with practical education. He raises cattle and horses on his own property.

With over a decade in advising Lebanon’s agriculture program, Inman says while the content has updated, the mission stays the same: embedding moral skills and the importance of agriculture in the community.

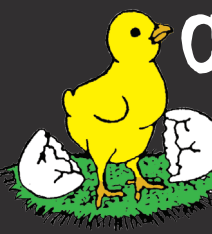
“I believe agriculture is still the backbone of America,” Inman said. “You’ve always heard that saying: ‘You need a lawyer, you need a doctor, you need a banker, but you’re going to need a farmer at least three times a day.’ We put food on people’s tables and it’s a sacrifice to do that.”

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FFA officers speak at the 2024 ice cream social.



Members participated in and ran a labor auction at the fair. John Sanwald ultimately purchased the tractor donated by the Morgan family.



Left to right: Junior Emma Jones, sophomore Maddie Kreuer, freshmen Jodey Starmer and Cayda Cromer and junior Bee Russell made it to districts in the Area Fall Speaker contest.



Lebanon FFA members attended the state convention in spring 2024.



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Chapter attendees at the 2023 National Convention.



Lebanon chapter members with their newly acquired Greenhand and Chapter degrees.



Members Kylee Johnson, Gracie Gilby, Baylyn Williams and Marissa Gress at the Fort Worth Stockyards during the chapter's Ag Industry Tour in October.



Members also participated in a fall softball tournament.



Brian Wade with Laclede Electric Cooperative informs students about the line-worker career pathway.



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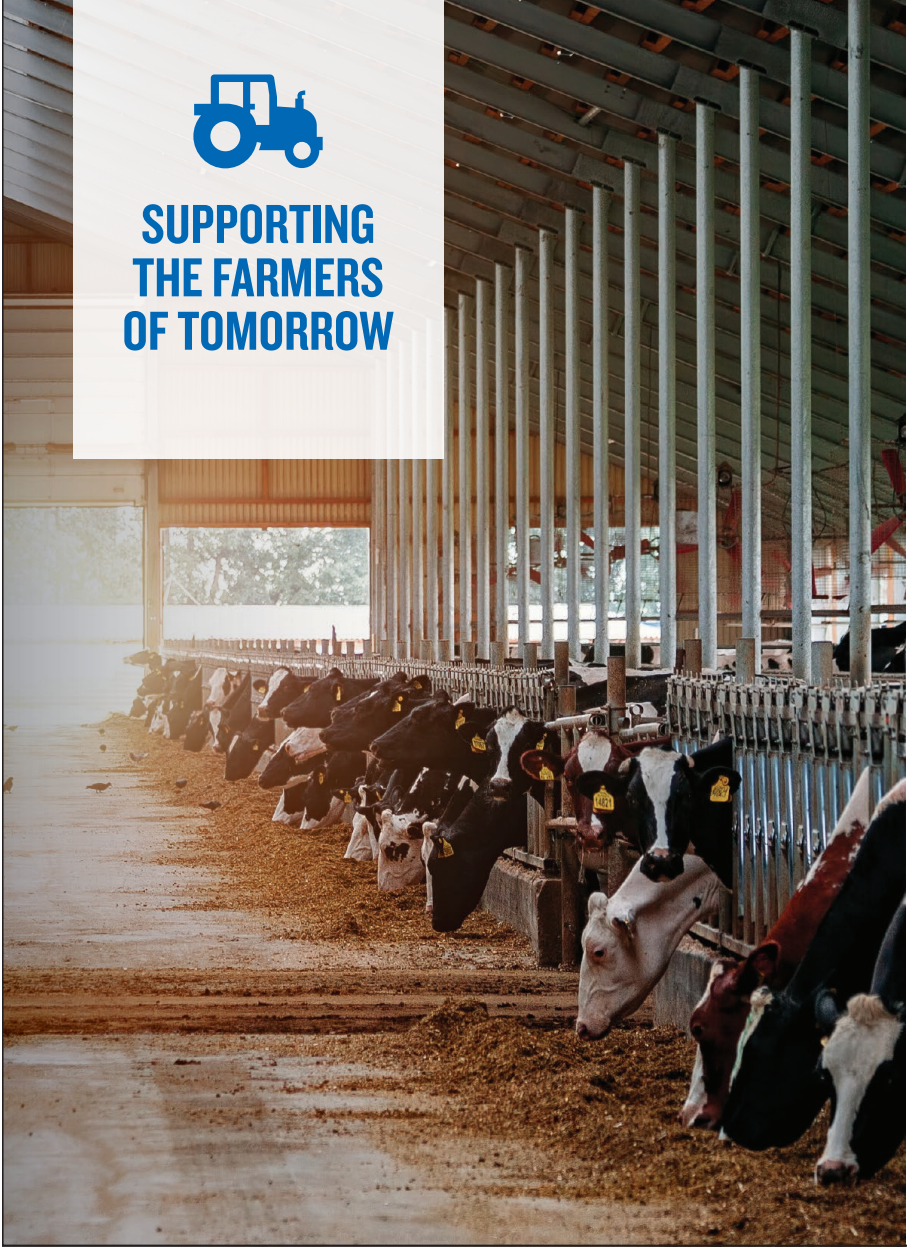
FFA members after a fall three on three basketball tournament.



Members of the Agriculture 2 Construction class.



In addition to participating in the Laclede County Fair, the Lebanon chapter also helped with its setup.




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Jocelynn Newell working with her show lamb. She also shows market swine and horses.



Aliyah Jones has grown her bee SAE through various local and national grants over the past four years.



Aleigh Hanlon is new to the SAE realm, but she started her own raised bed garden at home to provide fresh fruits and vegetables for her family.



While at the National FFA Convention, some members picked apples at a U-Pick Apple Orchard.



FFA members receiving awards at last year's chapter banquet.

Stoutland FFA looks towards state contests

JACK SILBERBERG
REPORTER@LACLEDERECORD.COM

As soon as school starts, Stoutland FFA advisor Zane Lowrance said, the busy season is back on for his students. "Typically, we start back pretty heavy in September," Lowrance said.

Fall events include Barnwarming among other social events. The group also attended the organization's national convention, took Ag Industry Tours to facilities such as a shrimp farm and fundraised for the program.

After a successful contest season last year, Lowrance says the chapter is poised to push for state achievements.

He noted that this year's officer team is as strong as the best of his past teams and provides leadership in competitions and in the chapter. Lowrance's hope was that the chapter's contest teams in forestry, floriculture, dairy foods, poultry as well as nursery and landscape would compete at the state level.

Lowrance organizes his teams with the goal of having more than the required four students on each, as he believes this encourages competition, mentorship and cooperation as well as increases the likelihood of the team's success.

Stoutland hosts its own contest in March. Its Career Development Event hosts nine contest areas: equine, agronomy, dairy food, entomology, floriculture, forest, livestock, nursery, and poultry. The contest attracts about one thousand students from across Missouri.

Alongside contest season is the organization's state convention, where students earn proficiency awards related to the fields that they usually compete in. These require the completion of record books and can come with plaques, certificates and cash prizes.

Lowrance reported the following Area 13 proficiency results:

Aliyah Jones (first in Specialty Animal Production, second in Ag Processing), Kaden Morgan (first in sheep production), Jocelynn Newell (first in Ag Education), Michael Kincaid (second in Wildlife Management), Harlee Matthews (third in Landscape Management), and Mallory Shaw (fourth in Small Animal Production).

Those who receive first place will be recognized on the state convention stage.

Before contest season begins, the chapter's officers organize pep events for National FFA Week: Monday is Camo Day, Tuesday is Hillbilly or Farmer Day, Wednesday is Tractor and Tractor Apparel Day, and Thursday is FFA Colors Day. The district's four-day schedule allows students to prepare for Saturday's contest on Friday.

Freshmen are usually nervous for the first contest, but Lowrance said that it helps them to have experienced juniors and seniors to mentor them in their contest areas. The contest practices held on Fridays are one of the ways that students showcase their passion, he added.



"That's something you can't teach," Lowrance had said previously about the students' willingness to work on off days.

On the SAE side, projects include career placement, livestock and plant management among other student interests. The timeline varies from project to project, but Lowrance said that students must have a project by the June following their freshman year.

Like in other chapters, Stoutland students augment and develop their projects throughout their four years in the

program. Lowrance used the example of chapter president Aliyah Jones, who began her beekeeping SAE with no knowledge of the subject and now has four hives.

Lowrance said that his focus in the three-circle model (classroom, FFA, SAE), is on the classroom, and his classroom program has three components: plant science, animal science, and shop.

Freshmen usually learn animal science, and the sophomores learn plant science. Juniors can attend either shop class or a seated class that rotates between animal and plant sciences. Seniors can take the alternate seated class the following year.

"So the kids don't have maybe as much choice being in a small school, but I think it'd surprise you how many kids kind of change their tune and say, 'I'm more interested maybe in the plants now,' or, 'You know what, I understand that I have to know what feeds my livestock, the plant science side, in order to effectively control the animal science portion,'" Lowrance said.

Lowrance said people would also be surprised to see how many students go on to have a career in or otherwise remain invested in agriculture following graduation.

Around 50 percent of his students will go on to have an investment in agricultural production, with most not being small-time farmers. Lowrance added that around 80-90 percent of students that will use leadership and communication skills developed during the program.

Part of Lowrance's tendency towards independent learning is evident in his shop classes, where students are self-directed. Some are more interested in the entrepreneurial side and sell their projects, but some are drawn simply to learning practical skills.

Lowrance said the FFA program teaches more than a standard definition of agriculture, noting the emphasis on leadership skills, community connections, and life skills. All these aspects lead back to strengthening the program's agricultural backbone.

"Agriculture encompasses so many things," Lowrance said. "I think if you look up a Webster's Dictionary definition, it's going to tell you something along the lines of, 'the science and production of food, fiber and natural resources,' and I think we're so much more than that."

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Students planting and transplanting plants in the school greenhouse.



Mallory Shaw has many facets to her SAE. One is growing fruits and vegetables in her garden.



The grasslands team placed fourth in districts and moved on to state this past fall.



While at the National FFA Convention, members toured Caterpillar, Inc.



FFA members preparing for the FFA Expo at the National FFA Convention.

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Harlee Matthews and Kaydence Stubblefield practicing for a dairy foods contest.



Photo of the Stoutland FFA Chapter in dress attire from last March. The chapter currently has 32 members.



Members preparing to buy cattle at Lebanon Livestock during the mock auction event hosted by Mid-Missouri Bank.



Stoutland participates in Wreaths Across America, where they place wreaths on veterans' graves.



Harlee Mathews's SAE is working for a local lady, where she takes care of the landscaping duties during the summer.



Mallory Shaw has many facets to her SAE. One is goat production.



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Members at the national convention toured an indoor shrimp farm operation.



Kaden Morgan at the grasslands contest shooting slope.



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Conway FFA builds success with community

JACK SILBERBERG
REPORTER@LACLEDERECORD.COM

Ahead of contest season, Conway FFA advisory Mary Anne Keck is finalizing State FFA Degrees from a year that has seen interesting Supervised Agricultural Experiences and program growth. None of which, she says, would be possible without the community that supports the chapter.



State FFA Degrees, according to Keck, are the highest school era certifications and have four categories: Agribusiness, Agriscience, Ownership, and Placement. The Star distinction represents the top application in each category, and Conway had two Star applications last year.

The following students received State FFA Degrees in 2024: Cade Archer, Gracie Perryman, Trista Simpson, Lauren Wissbaum, Anna Sheets, Maddy Officer, Paige Po Heiger, Maysen Doing (Area 10 Star Agribusiness), Sydni Wilson, and Brady Mephram (Area 10 Star Placement).

Keck said the chapter's participation levels are higher than in previous years. She described the freshman as go-getters, the large sophomore class as leadership-oriented, the juniors as workers and the senior class as small but the cream of the crop.

"I'm pretty excited about, especially the next three years," Keck said. "We're going to have a lot of fun out here. These kids are going to be able to achieve quite a bit. And they have different goals that push Mr. James [the program's other instructor] and I to go in a thousand different directions, but it's okay."

The students lead the charge in organizing activities, Keck said, and one of those is the chapter's annual Truck and Tractor Pulls in the fall. With "every hand on deck," Keck noted that the event relies on students, parents, and community

members to succeed.

The program's leadership class secures sponsorships for the events, which helps the program to turn a profit from the Pulls. Keck attributes the increase in sponsorships in large part to the students using their connections and doing the footwork to secure them.

"I think the other reason

is our students have proven they're worth investing in. They leave a positive impression on a lot of people, because they handle themselves so professionally," Keck said.

Keck described the classroom ring of the FFA circle adjusts itself to serve student interests while preparing them for potential careers. The program's curriculum includes animal science, greenhouse, construction or agriculture mechanics, an agriscience research class and agriculture leadership class.

Once students realize that they research under a different name all the time, Keck said, students become more interested in that class. She also noted that the leadership class is valuable for the communication skills it aims to teach, such as the importance of thank-you cards, in addition to other project support.

SAEs are connected to proficiency area awards, but Keck emphasized that Conway's chapter focuses on the projects themselves as tools for development. These projects influence the classes students take just as the classes can in turn influence how students develop their projects.

As an example of an SAE: a student buys produce wholesale from her family and sells it locally. This prevents waste, Keck says, and expands their customer base. The student later began growing flowers and selling arrangements.

Other students grow livestock for



FFA members must have a successful Supervised Agricultural Experience and have actively participated in the FFA to apply for their State FFA Degree. We have thirteen who have submitted applications to receive the second highest degree awarded in the National FFA Organization. Abbie Brake, Tyler Replogle, Jaxson Johnston, Justin Davis, Alex Avalos, Mason Miller, Tucker Johnston, Jake Maxwell, Brandon Penner, Daniel Elam, Jackson Gunter, and Sydni Wilson (not pictured).

customers based on the latter's specifications. Keck felt that students like these have an advantage in knowing the entire production process. Another student engages in agriculture education with elementary students, and yet another builds furniture.

The chapter's emphasis on SAEs showcases Keck's assertion that the program is not solely about contests. With SAEs, Keck felt individual development is more centered than in a team-oriented competition.

"I'd much rather have a kid with a strong SAE project than win a state contest," Keck said.

In the spirit of seeing the diversity of agriculture in the country, the chapter also embarked on a five-day Ag Industry Tour in the fall and visited different agriculture businesses in seven states. Aside

from the agricultural aspects of the trip, the 25 students also visited landmarks like Mt. Rushmore.

Closer to home, Conway FFA volunteers in and helps organize community events like blood drives. In giving back to the community, the chapter returns the investment that community puts into the chapter.

Without the support of the school district and community, Keck says the chapter's success would not be possible.

"To me, it's not something that you can give credit to these kids or this building. Credit's got to be spread accordingly," Keck said. "It really does take a village to raise a kid."

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Wade and Faith Evans donated pigs for the Pig Scramble the chapter hosts during Conway Community Days each September. This is always a big hit with the kids and adults.



32 FFA members qualified to attend the Ag Industry Tour this past fall. Members traveled through eight states in five days, visiting several agriculture businesses while also getting to see some of the nation's landmarks such as Mt. Rushmore and Cheyenne Frontier Days.




"It takes a lot of man hours to prepare for the Laclede County Fair. However, many hands make light work, and our members proved that while setting up for this past year's event," Keck reported. 16 Conway FFA members worked with members from Lebanon to prepare the livestock barns in record time.



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• Local Artisans •
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Rusty Rooster Marketplace
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Monday - Saturday 9-5
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In order for members to obtain their Chapter FFA Degree, they must first receive their Greenhand FFA Degree, have an active Supervised Agricultural Experience, and lead a group discussion on an agriculture topic of their choice.



Chapter members pride themselves in giving back to the community that continues to support our program. These three freshmen designed the Trunk or Treat setup and handed candy to trick or treaters during the Conway Community Trunk or Treat event.



FFA officers and the Ag Leadership Class organized an Animal Field Day for the elementary school last April. Conway members brought in eight different animal species and taught the elementary students about how they impact the agriculture industry.

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Thirty-five first year Conway FFA members were awarded their Greenhand FFA Degree in November. Members must recite the FFA Creed, be able to explain the history and traditions of the FFA, and have plans for their SAE.

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The Conway FFA Chapter.



A record number of Conway FFA members sold over \$300 during the Annual Fruit and Meat Sales to qualify to attend Ozark Farm Fest with the chapter.

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THE FFA MOTTO



FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

When we teach our children our traditions, we do more than teach them a skill.

We ensure that our values continue into the next generation — and beyond.

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