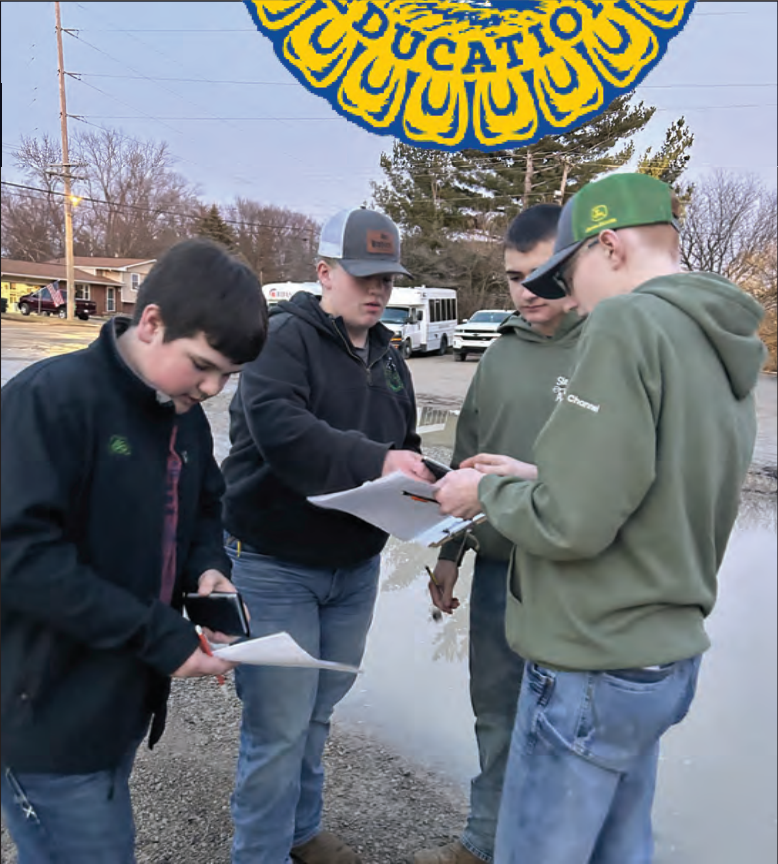


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BY BETHANY WAGONER
bwagoner@prairiepress.net

With 116 registered students and 34 active sectional members, the FFA chapter at Paris Cooperative High School is Edgar County's largest branch of the National FFA Organization. The students enrolled in the national program are more than "AG kids or those who plan to be farmers." They are future leaders and entrepreneurs, according to the high school's FFA advisor, Kiarra Englum.

"While agriculture is at the heart of what we do, FFA offers opportunities in leadership, business, science, mechanics and more," Englum said. "Our members come from all backgrounds, with a variety of interests, but they all share a common goal: personal growth and career success."

Englum explained the FFA motto, "Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve," is something the group strives "to embody every day."

"(The motto) reflects the hands-on learning experiences FFA provides, the work ethic we develop and the commitment we have to serving our community," she said. "Whether it's through classroom education, career development events or community service projects, our chapter is dedicated to preparing students for bright futures both in and beyond agriculture."

The Paris FFA chapter's primary focus is leadership and preparing students for life outside of high school. Attending career development competitions, various leadership conferences, participating in community service events and planning fundraisers are ways the students gain first-hand experiences and branch out of their comfort zones.

"We do our best to ensure our students make the most out of their FFA careers and are able to experience all options possible offered through this amazing program," Englum said.

National FFA week is an ideal opportunity for the chapter members to showcase everything they have learned and fulfill the group's motto. This year the Paris chapter has a bevy of fundraisers planned, as well as entertaining educational activities.

"Monday is our FFA pancake

also love to show off their athletic skills at events like this," Englum shared.

On Wednesday students have the opportunity to dress like a farmer and drive a tractor to school. The entire school will celebrate America on Thursday with students dressing in their best American gear.

"Finally to finish our week we are hosting a \$1 hat day for our students at Paris Cooperative High School," Englum said. "All proceeds made from this day will go towards our chapter to continue funding special

and internship programs that help students gain hands-on experience in agriculture, business and other industries.

"Many local farms and agribusinesses support us by offering tours, hosting workshops, and sharing their expertise with our students," Englum said. "We encourage students to get involved in FFA by showing them that it offers something for everyone, no matter their background or career interests. Whether they enjoy leadership, hands-on projects, public speaking

FFA with others, our community plays a vital role in strengthening our program," she explained. "By working together, we can continue to create opportunities that prepare students for success in agriculture and beyond ...Our Paris FFA Chapter thrives because of the incredible support from our community, and there are many ways people can continue to help us grow. Attending our events, such as our annual pancake breakfast and FFA auction, not only provides financial support but also shows our members that their hard work is valued."

On a personal level, the advisor shared how much the chapter enjoys community service events.

"It truly warms my heart to see the students eager to help improve our community," Englum said. "Whether it be through the other local schools, city clean up days, Christmas basket deliveries or just helping community members out with tasks when asked. We really do have a great group of students with the biggest hearts."

Englum encouraged local businesses and individuals to continue supporting the local chapter by sponsoring scholarships, donating resources, providing opportunities for students to job shadow or intern and by simply showing up.

"The FFA is an inclusive community where anyone from any background can find their place," she said. "It is a great way to get out of your comfort zone and try something new. Students are able to get involved in community service, leadership, attend conferences, overnight trips and conventions that expand their knowledge ... whether they have an agricultural background or not. FFA helps students develop skills, career readiness and a strong sense of service."

Breakfast, it will be open to the public and held at the 4-H fairgrounds," Englum said. "Our pancake breakfast is our biggest community event that we look forward to all year long. We love being able to serve our community and supporters a delicious breakfast in honor of kicking off FFA week."

On Tuesday all students at the high school will participate in pajama day and that evening FFA alumni will have pizza and an AG Olympic night.

"This is our first year that the FFA Alumni is hosting an AG Olympic night and we are excited to see everyone who participates, the kids

events/contests for our FFA Program."

The FFA advisor hopes that by incorporating school dress-up days, every student will take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the fun events.

"(I hope) it encourages students to join a program as fun as FFA," Englum said. "Our Paris FFA Chapter values the strong relationships we have with local businesses, farms and organizations, they play a key role in providing real-world learning experiences for our members."

The chapter collaborates with local businesses through sponsorships, job shadowing opportunities

or business, FFA provides opportunities to develop skills that will benefit them for a lifetime."

All students at the high school are frequently invited to participate in FFA meetings, competitions, community service projects and leadership conferences to experience how FFA can help them grow individually. Members of the community are also encouraged to attend events, volunteer as guest speakers or mentors and support student projects, according to Englum.

"Whether it's helping at our FFA auction, partnering with students for work-based learning experiences or simply sharing the impact of

“
**THE FFA IS AN INCLUSIVE
COMMUNITY WHERE ANYONE
FROM ANY BACKGROUND
CAN FIND THEIR PLACE**”

KIARRA ENGLUM
PCHS FFA ADVISOR





BY JENNIFER STALEY
staleyj@kansas.k12.il.us

The Kansas FFA Chapter is thriving in Kansas as it continues to foster leadership, community service and agricultural education. With a dedicated group of active members, the chapter is making an impact both locally and at the district and state levels. Through contests, conferences and service projects, the Kansas FFA is empowering students to become the future leaders of agriculture and beyond.

A FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

One of the primary focuses of the Kansas FFA Chapter is leadership development. The chapter competes in a variety of agricultural contests throughout the year, allowing students to showcase their skills and knowledge in real-world applications. These contests, which occur at both the local and district levels, help students hone their abilities while building confidence.

In addition to their competitive achievements, Kansas FFA members are heavily involved in community service. One of their most beloved initiatives is Oper-

ation Secret Santa, a project where they spread Christmas cheer to every student in the local elementary school. The chapter works year-round to make a positive difference in the community by offering support to those who need it most.

“We want the public to know that Kansas FFA is more than just an agricultural club. We are a family,” said Jennifer Staley, FFA advisor for Kansas. “We create an environment where students can blossom into the best versions of themselves, and we help them do the same for our community.”

NATIONAL FFA WEEK CELEBRATIONS

In celebration of National FFA Week, the Kansas FFA Chapter has planned a week of exciting events for the community. Each day of the week, from Monday to Friday, will bring unique opportunities for students, families and local residents to engage in agricultural education and fun-filled activities.

Monday (7 to 9 a.m.): Farmer Breakfast – A chance for the community to enjoy a hearty meal while connecting with local farmers.

Tuesday: Kiddie Tractor

Pull and Tractor Drive – A fun event where kids can experience the thrill of driving peddle tractors.

Wednesday: Ag in the Classroom – FFA members

community to get involved and learn more about agriculture in a fun, interactive way.

“We aim to create experiences that students and

in Ashmore, which will be bringing tractors to the school on Tuesday for the Kiddie Tractor Pull and Tractor Drive. The chapter is also grateful for the on-

al FFA Week, the Kansas FFA Chapter has big plans for the future. The chapter hopes to continue expanding leadership opportunities, providing more educational experiences for members, and giving back to the community through service initiatives.

“We want to keep building on the foundation we’ve established and continue to offer our members opportunities to grow and lead,” Staley said. “FFA is about more than just agriculture. It’s about shaping tomorrow’s leaders today.”

JOIN THE FFA FAMILY

For students considering joining the FFA, the chapter has some advice: “Don’t hesitate – dive in! FFA provides invaluable experiences that prepare you for success in any field. It’s a great way to build life skills, make lifelong friendships, and become a part of a supportive family.”

The Kansas FFA Chapter invites everyone to participate in their National FFA Week activities and hopes to see the community at their upcoming events. To learn more about the chapter or how to get involved, contact the school for more information.

“
WE WANT THE PUBLIC TO
KNOW THAT KANSAS FFA
IS MORE THAN JUST AN
AGRICULTURAL CLUB. WE
ARE A FAMILY,”

JENNIFER STALEY
KANSAS FFA ADVISOR

the community can learn from and enjoy,” said Staley. “Through activities like the petting zoo and Ag Olympics, we provide opportunities for hands-on learning and leadership development.”

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Kansas FFA Chapter’s ability to host successful events and projects is largely due to the support it receives from local businesses and organizations. One such partner is AHW

going support from community members, who regularly participate in events like the Farmer Breakfast.

“The Kansas community has always supported our chapter, and we are grateful for their involvement,” said Amanda Gough. “We encourage them to continue supporting us by attending our events or calling the school to see how they can help further.”

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Special to The Prairie Press
Kansas students and Kansas FFA members traveled to Lakeland College in Mattoon to compete in Envirothon on March 7.

Special to The Prairie Press
Four Kansas FFA members attended Ag Legislative Day at the state capitol in Springfield. They met Adam Niemerg in his office, had a short tour of the capitol building, took a state photo with Governor Pritzker and Director of Agriculture Jerry Costello and delivered a lunch and commodity basket to another representative.



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Shiloh FFA received new jackets in November thanks to a generous donation by Illini FS. The students were thrilled when they came in to pass out the jackets. The jackets unify members in a long-standing tradition and reminds them that they are part of something bigger than themselves. Each member is grateful for the opportunity.

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INVESTING - IN RURAL - Illinois



BY BETHANY WAGONER
bwagoner@prairiepress.net

With a strong commitment to service and education, student members at Shiloh School's FFA are going beyond the classroom to support local farmers, teach younger students about agriculture and bring their community together.

"Our chapter's biggest objectives are community service and agriculture education," Shiloh FFA advisor Emma Ennis said. "When it comes to community service, we love to focus on our farmers. Our favorite event is when we provide lunch for farmers during harvest season as they drive through the grain elevator."

During the annual harvest community service event, Shiloh FFA members partner with local farmers to supply food and drinks. The students hand-pack lunches and deliver them to drivers in the seats of their vehicles at two different grain elevators.

"Our members are very hard-working, capable and have a heart for service," Ennis said. "Whether there is a chance to lend a helping hand, solve a problem or set an example of leadership, Shiloh FFA members always rise to the occasion."

The 77 students currently involved in the school's FFA program also enjoy doing AG in the classroom activities with the younger grades in the school, especially during FFA Week, when they "bring in tractors and

members will drive their tractors to school. The chapter will host a barnyard petting zoo on Thursday, and to show appreciation, the students will give the school staff goodie bags on Friday.

sion," she shared. "Our current big goal for the year is our plant sale coming this Spring ... Looking down the road, we would love to host a tractor drive."

At the center of each event, the

work with a supportive community."

The chapter has greatly affected not only the communities it serves but also the lives of the students who have participated.

"FFA has helped me grow into the person that I am today," Chapter Secretary Maggie Milburn shared.

Her sentiments were echoed by Chapter Treasurer Brooke Sharp, who said, "FFA has the power to change lives."

FFA introduces students to a wide variety of agricultural careers and fosters leadership development that can last a lifetime. The program also offers leadership development and a chance to enhance communication skills and explore careers.

"You also have the opportunity to make friendships that can last a lifetime. FFA helps its members to become their best selves," Ennis said. "The Shiloh FFA officer team puts a focus on recruitment. They love reaching out to students to share what FFA offers, and they often work with community members to arrange events such as our farmer lunch day and our chapter banquet."

“OUR MEMBERS ARE VERY HARD-WORKING, CAPABLE AND HAVE A HEART FOR SERVICE,”

EMMA ENNIS
SHILOH FFA ADVISOR

animals to display and teach about them."

"Our officers have worked very hard to prepare lessons for our elementary classes, and we cannot wait to teach our future members about agriculture," Ennis shared. "(It) is a chance to get younger students in contact with agriculture. For many of them, it could be their first time learning about where their food comes from."

AG in the class will kick off the school's celebration of National FFA Week on Tuesday. On Wednesday,

"These activities are a chance for our school district to come to explore our agriculture department and learn about what we do and why we do it," Ennis explained, adding that her students take the initiative seriously.

While FFA as a whole organization is made up of the country's future leaders, Shiloh FFA members are unique and have "a certain level of initiative that is difficult to find anywhere else," according to Ennis.

"Our members take matters into their own hands and plan all of our events with minimal adult supervi-

chapter said their goal is to support the community they serve. Through service projects, outreach programs and education, Ennis and the student members of Shiloh FFA keep their focus on their roots and the people they serve.

The group also makes it a priority to welcome the community into their projects.

"We welcome help of any kind from our community. We appreciate guest speakers, knowledgeable industry workers offering advice and donations," Ennis said. "We are grateful to



BY VICTORIA LEITCH
vleitch@prairiepress.net

The Chrisman FFA Chapter has had an eventful and successful year, showcasing the dedication and hard work of its members. From excelling in competitions to engaging with the local community, the chapter continues to uphold the values of the National FFA Organization.

Several Chrisman FFA members recently competed in the Illinois Section 18 FFA Proficiency Award Interviews, where they demonstrated their expertise and record-keeping skills in their respective Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects. Members earned first-place finishes, advancing to the District 4 competition in March. The accomplishments reflect the dedication and

passion of the students, who have invested countless hours in their projects.

The Chrisman FFA Chapter is approaching its 100-year milestone, a significant achievement that has sparked enthusiasm among members and the community. With deep-rooted family ties in the organization, many students have a generational connection to FFA. The anticipation for the centennial celebration has inspired younger members to work toward earning their State FFA Degrees in time for the historic event.

The community has been over-

whelmingly supportive, recognizing the significance of FFA beyond school events. While members often participate in service proj-

“THERE’S A HEAVY, ROOTED PASSION FOR FFA IN THE COMMUNITY. THAT’S AMAZING TO SEE.”

JENNIFER HONNOLD
CHRISMAN FFA ADVISOR

ects and fundraisers, community members have gained a deeper appreciation for the organization through social media and firsthand accounts of state and national-level achievements.

Two graduated students earned the prestigious American FFA

Degree this past fall, the highest recognition awarded by the National FFA Organization. Their accomplishment marks a significant

milestone in chapter history, as they are only the third and fourth members to receive this honor.

Chrisman FFA members have also been active in community

initiatives, including partnering with FCCLA for a fresh strawberry fundraiser. They also played a key role in the annual Chrisman Days, participating in the parade, assisting at the public library and contributing to the tractor pull event.

During the Illinois FFA State

Convention, members were recognized for their achievements. Additionally, students participated in packaging meals with Meals from the Heartland to aid hunger relief efforts worldwide.

The Section 18 annual banquet provided an opportunity to celebrate the chapter's accomplishments, with members receiving team plaques and individual awards for their dedication throughout the year.

With a strong legacy and an even brighter future, the Chrisman FFA Chapter continues to inspire and cultivate the next generation of agricultural leaders. Their dedication to excellence, community involvement and historical preservation ensures that FFA will remain a cornerstone of Chrisman for years to come.



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