



# The Alabama FFA REPORTER

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## FFA MAKES LEADERSHIP REAL



**GRACE SMITH**  
President

“FFA Makes It Real.” You may ask, FFA makes what real? Well, FFA has made leadership real for me. When I was young, I thought that leadership was something you were born with instead of something you worked to achieved. I would watch the leaders in my school and community and was impressed by the talent and self-confidence they possessed. They had the ability to influence everyone they came into contact with. I always wanted to have the influence they had, but, being a reserved person, I thought that God had not intended for me to be a leader. Then He led me to the FFA. By leading me into this organization, He showed me how to become a leader and to influence people for good things.

As I look back onto my first FFA meeting, I see this quiet red-head who rarely participated in chapter business, much less took a leadership role. I thought I did not have the potential to be a leader. However, one day the opportunity presented itself when my Agriscience teacher asked me to interview for a chapter officer position. Being convinced of my inability to lead others, I almost turned that opportunity down. After much urging from my parents, I decided to run. After that grueling interview, I was convinced that I had let any chance for leadership slip through my fingers. I missed several of my questions and I was not really quite sure what an SAEP was in general, let alone what MY SAEP was. When the judges came in to announce the new officers, I wanted to disappear. Then I heard my name announced. On that sunny April day, I held my first leadership position--the 2nd vice president,

which, at my school is the lowest position, but is still considered an office. Although that was the lowest office I could have achieved, I thank God so much for it, because it set the stage for higher leadership positions. Through that office, I was given the encouragement to reach for greater leadership goals.

I have seen leadership skills develop in others in this organization. One member of my chapter was selected as a national officer a few years ago. This opportunity provided him the chance to travel all over the United States and the world-including Japan, Puerto Rico, and Mexico. One reason that FFA officers get the chance to travel and tour the agricultural facilities in other countries is that the FFA is recognized internationally as the membership of future leaders in agriculture.

I have also noticed that younger members of the FFA look up to the present officers as mentors in developing the skills that will allow them to go places and accomplish things. Many of my younger chapter members ask me questions about how to develop a SAEP, how to get involved as an

officer, why public speaking is important, and what exciting trips being a state officer has offered me. In answering their questions, I am able to influence how they feel about their own possibilities and to encourage them to develop their own skills. I know that the leadership opportunities of FFA are not for everybody, but I do know that the organization offers something that should interest everyone.

The reason for membership in any organization is to have fellowship with others that share common interests or goals or both. All FFA members share an interest in pursuits that involve working and managing the land-as farmers, hunters, fishermen, foresters, ag businessmen, etc. In any interest, there must be leaders of that membership-those who have a vision for the future of the organization and how it can fit into the national and international scheme of things. The leaders of the FFA must have that vision and plan and the skill to influence others to help them develop the plan. FFA offers the opportunity to develop that vision and skill. I hope that all FFA members will allow FFA to make Leadership real in their lives.



**2001-2002 STATE OFFICER TEAM** — The officers are (l-r) Grace Smith, President, Billingsley; Devin Dotson, Vice President, Red Bay; Alyson Johnson, Secretary, Geraldine; Dennis Busby, Treasurer, Kinston; Ashley Green, Reporter, New Brockton; Jarrod Smitherman, Sentinel, Isabella.

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**DEVIN DOTSON**  
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In the seventh grade, life was pushing right along – no real problems, but no real direction, either. I soon found a place where I could belong, learn about the world, and have the opportunity to influence many lives along life’s way. I couldn’t be more excited! You see, there in the seventh grade, I joined the FFA and first got involved in our Quartet. Meeting others, traveling, and competing – what a combination! I loved every minute of it.

Sometime after joining, Mr. Trulove, my FFA advisor, spoke to me about running for a chapter office. I had no idea what this consisted of and told him so. He explained to me it involved helping with chapter activities, attending meetings, and a little more. I ran in the next election and was elected to serve my chapter as Vice President for the following year. Thus I began to learn more of the FFA and truly understand what it meant to so many.

That year, some members of our Quartet had graduated and we were not able to attend the

National Convention as National Talent. The String Band was going and needed a keyboard player. I decided to take the opportunity. I had been to National Convention the year before and had seen first hand the sessions, reflections, dancing, and other great events there.

I decided to run for a District Office at the end of my ninth grade year. I did some quick FFA history studying and left for the interview with more butterflies than I had ever had. I distinctly remember relating the FFA to a key – how it can open so many doors for the future and how we never know what’s ahead until we use it. The rest of it has become a nervous jumble.

During the summer, I traveled to our nation’s great capital to attend the Washington Leadership Conference with a fellow FFA member from my chapter. We had such a great time learning about leadership, seeing the remarkable sights of Washington, DC, and returned with a great sense of self-awareness and goals for the future. I also made many friendships that will last a lifetime. I met Lybbi Stiefel and Thomas Hall, two of last year’s State Officers, who have helped me along my way to where I am today. This year at convention, I saw other friends from far and wide that I met during that great week. It is truly amazing to see the effect the FFA has on so many people. So many students see their dreams become reality with the encouragement the FFA provides.

I served two great years as a North District Officer. I will never forget attending District Officer leadership workshops in Columbiana, meeting our State Officers, and making so many new friends. Two of my best memories are conducting the North District Workshops in Decatur and Boaz. Seeing so many FFA members understand the power of the FFA and helping them make real some of their life goals has had a tremendous impact on me. I came away from the events each year, feeling refreshed and excited. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to help as many people as I could. I realized the next rung on this ladder was then to run for State Office. I knew this would give me the opportunity to give back to the FFA and serve others who were on their own success journeys.

I continued to sing in our Quartet and play in our String Band. The FFA made the effects of practicing and dedication real in my life at State Convention. I traveled to Montgomery with the Quartet and String Band both years to compete at the State level. I also competed in Public Speaking. Two years ago our Quartet sang our hearts out and brought home our first State Champion banner. There is nothing like dedicating your heart to something, giving your all, and seeing the wonderful results. I also brought home a

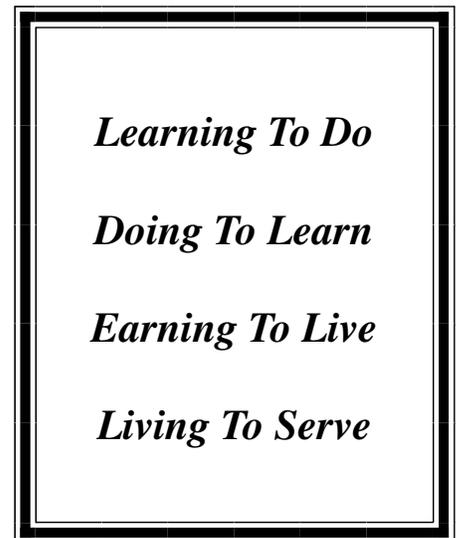
second place banner in Public Speaking that year. Although I didn’t win State, I was more proud of that banner than anyone could have known.

I entered Public Speaking that year never having seen a competition. I worked so hard researching and memorizing. I tried to get everything just right and told myself no matter what the outcome, I would not let it get me down. After winning at Area and District, I was just excited to make it to State. I gave it my all when I competed and knew that was all I could do. I graciously accepted that banner. But reward and dedication were not the only things I returned with from Convention that year. I also gained a new friend.

I first met our National Officer candidate, Jennifer Edwards, when she escorted me to the room for my Public Speaking competition. Later at Columbiana and then at Boaz and Decatur I learned exactly how she loved the FFA and what it had done for her. Her zeal and commitment inspired me to become more than I knew I could be.

I studied hard and prepared for the State interviews. Because of the long hours at night and the nervousness endured waiting in the hall, and Mr. Cadell’s many speeches the 12 candidates became a close family. In each of those candidates I also saw how the FFA had helped make their dreams a reality. When both the Quartet and String Band brought home a First Place banner this year, I was so overjoyed. I competed in Public Speaking again and won a fourth place banner. The week’s culmination was Thursday morning sitting on the front row, waiting for the new State Officers to be announced. When my name was called a whirlwind of events was set into action.

Pictures, traveling, and new lives to touch became a reality. From the emotional



**DENNIS BUSBY**  
Treasurer

**ASHLEY GREEN**  
Reporter



speeches from Jennifer, Ronnie, and the other National Officers at convention, to visiting Alabama FFA Chapters and sharing about the FFA, I have learned much more about life already this year. I am excited about meeting more FFA members and planning for State Convention. I'm sure it will be one of my life's greatest memories. I know my story is one of many and I am proud to say that the FFA has definitely Made It Real for me in so many ways.

**ALYSON JOHNSON**  
Secretary

FFA makes it real to me through personal growth and defining the true meaning of leadership. All through my FFA career I saw FFA as a fun way to meet people, have a good time, and to get out of class. But this past year while preparing for state office and the time I have spent as a state officer has been totally incredible. I have discovered more of my self this year than I have in my entire life.

It all started when Jennifer Edwards told me this, "You never know how many lives you can touch by just being yourself." This statement really made me think about who Alyson Johnson is and how that affects other people around me. I have discovered that I am a servant, not a "leader". A "leader" just leads, but a servant empowers and builds up those around them while leading.

This revelation in my life has made all of the difference. I have been given many opportunities to serve, not only on the state level, but also on the National level. This past October I had the chance to serve on the National Officer Nominating Committee. This was an awesome opportunity. While getting to know forty-one dynamic individuals, I got to know myself better too. It makes me feel wonderful knowing that I have served all 500,000 FFA members and hopefully helped someone else discover who they are, just by being myself, this is how FFA makes it real to me!

Since June 2001, I have been given the opportunity to gain the five best friendships ever. I'm talking about the friendships of my state officer team. At no other time in my life have I had the chance to be thrown together with five individuals all with the same goals, characteristics, and passions that I hold so dear. Each person on my officer team has his or her own unique characteristics, yet we all are bound by our love for agriculture.

We began the summer as individuals but started a new school year as a team. As a senior I'm beginning to understand what life is all about. It is about the experiences you make right now. I learned a lot this summer about relationships, not only those I gained but those I neglected. You see, this summer was composed of a very rigorous schedule. This summer I stayed busy through travels composed mainly of, but not entirely, of FFA trips. As a matter of fact, I was at home only 14 days of my summer vacation. That allowed for a lot of time to meet new people and see different things; but unfortunately, it also left little time for friends and family back at home. I found out that life is all about change and the way you adapt to it. I realized that there is a fine line between gaining one thing and losing another. I also realized that no matter how busy you get those that you love would always be there for you.

When school got out my schedule didn't let up. With the first semester of school being over with I have been in class an average of two and a half days a week. There is not a day that goes by that I don't have something to do, could be working on, something already late, or preparing something for the next day. I have survived the past seven months the same way I live life – with a positive attitude, strong faith and a hard work ethic. In the past seven months I've learned to balance leadership roles in various organizations, school, FFA, family, friends and God while at the same time finding time for myself. Of course, the balancing act has not been easy and it requires lots of hard work and lots of missed sleep; in fact, as I write this it is 1:47 a.m.

The most truthful thing I've ever heard is that you get out of something what you put into it. The FFA for me is life and just like life I am prospering in the hard work already put in. The FFA has provided me with everything life has to offer: success, failure, and happiness. No matter how busy it may be as long as I matter hard things seem to always get done. The FFA has made it real for me by showing me that true success requires hard work and a lot of it.

The FFA has definitely made it real for me in the Career Development Event area. I have participated in the Livestock Judging CDE and learned so many "life skills". In livestock judging you have four animals which you must evaluate and place. Then you have to enter a room with an oral reasons judge, who may have a completely different placing order than you, and tell him why you placed the animals the way you did. He may ask you questions about the tiniest details. The skills I have gained in the Livestock CDE have definitely helped me when I am speaking to a group of FFA members.

FFA has shown me that you must always be observant, evaluate carefully, and pay attention to the small details. They may make the difference in winning that trip to Louisville, KY or another year of hard work and practice. FFA has certainly made me realize that most of the time it's not what you say you are going to do but what you actually go forth and get accomplished.

Another big reality for me was becoming a State Officer. As an officer I feel a big responsibility to the Alabama Association. The Association depends on all the officers and myself to do a good job. We want to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to participate and that you get recognized for a job well done and that the State Convention is the best it can be.

FFA is definitely making it real for thousands of its members. For some people they may realize what they want to do with the rest of their lives, which may or may not involve agriculture. For others the FFA makes friendships a reality with the other members they meet in the chapter or at district, state, or national conventions.

All six state officers, the district officers, state staff members and your local advisor are all committed to making participation in FFA the most meaningful experience in your high school years. If you are an FFA member but have not become involved go speak to your advisor, and ask him how FFA can make it real for you!



**JARROD SMITHERMAN**  
**Sentinel**

The suspense was almost too much to handle. My hands were sweating, and my stomach felt like it was in my throat. The rest of the band and I waited for Jose Santiago to announce us so that we could go out on stage. I looked at Kevin, the guitarist, and asked him if he was ready. Before he could answer we were announced, and we all ran out onto the stage. The lights were blinding, all I could make out was the front row in the audience. I couldn't see the rest, but I could hear many more FFA members cheering as Kevin strummed the guitar intro. We were told later that there were 20,000 people in the audience listening to us. That's more than attend professional concerts many times! I couldn't believe that it was real; but it was real, and the FFA made it real.

FFA has also made another dream of mine a reality at last year's state convention. I was elected as a state officer. This is something that I have dreamed of doing for a very long time. I have had so much fun and learned so many things since being elected, and I look forward to many more fun opportunities to grow. The officer team has grown together since election and we have become like a family. We have done so much together, and this team holds the greatest friends I will ever have.

FFA has brought a truckload of other opportunities and fun to me as well. I compete in many CDEs, have attended or presented many workshops, and have traveled to state and national conventions. I encourage every one of you to do the same. I urge you to come to the Alabama State FFA Convention this year. The officer team is working hard to have the best state convention ever. Our intention is to help show as many members as well as nonmembers how the FFA can "Make it Real" for every one of them!

# Teach Agriculture

**Change the world  
one student at a time.**



# Teach Agriculture

## Teaching Agriculture

If you're a student in search of a ready market for your skills when you finish college, you have to consider teaching agriculture. Along with the many rewards which stem from helping students discover their own success, the limited supply of teachers compared to the demand means qualified candidates can choose from positions all across the nation.

### Advantages of teaching agriculture

- Working with people from all walks of life
- Preparing students for agricultural careers
- Serving as a role model for young people
- Experiencing new challenges and ideas daily
- Working both indoors and outside
- Traveling to a variety of places
- Building lifelong friendships with those who have similar interests
- Getting paid to do something you love to do

