



# THE ALABAMA FFA REPORTER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ALABAMA FFA ASSOCIATION

Volume 42

Summer/Fall 2016

NO. 1

[www.alabamaffa.org](http://www.alabamaffa.org)



## 2016-2017 Alabama State Officer Team

Sierra Goodwin, President; Ethan Mobley, Vice-President; Ben Castleberry, Secretary;  
Becky Hawkins, Treasurer; Hannah Black, Reporter; Torran Smith, Sentinel





# 88th Annual Alabama State Convention

by **Becky Hawkins**  
Treasurer

On June 7<sup>th</sup>, members and advisors began their journey to the Alabama State Convention. The

State CDE Finals were held in Auburn and students put all of their hard work and dedication to test.

The gavel dropped on June 8<sup>th</sup> in Montgomery at the Renaissance and Montgomery Performing Arts Centre for the 1<sup>st</sup> General Session of the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama FFA State Convention. Wade Gossett, State President, welcomed members, advisors, and supporters to the State Convention. Jacob Davis, State Advisor, gave the Advisor Challenge and showed the impact other chapters have made in their communities. The 2015-2016 North, Central, and South District officers were recognized for their year of service and introduced themselves. The 2016-2017 Candidates for State office were introduced as well. Advisor of the Year, H.N Lewis Scholarship winner, and Wall of Honor Inductees were honored and recognized during the first session. To close out the 1<sup>st</sup> General Session, inspiring words were shared by the Keynote Speaker, Brody Croyle. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Session was filled with recognizing student success. The State Star Farmer Ceremony was held, Proficiency Award Winners were recognized, and we heard the State String Band winner perform! We heard Retiring Address's from Anna Pollard, State Treasurer, and Ivy Harbin, State Reporter. Supporters of the Alabama FFA Association were honored and received the Honorary State Degree to close out the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Alabama State Convention. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Session kicked off June 9<sup>th</sup>, recognizing chapters with 100% Membership, Crime Prevention Awards, and the winner of the M. K. Heath Animal Health Award. Members dedication and hard work was awarded with the teams placing in the State CDE Finals and Proficiency Award Winners. Cassidy Catrett, State Secretary, and Whitney Hamby, State Sentinel, gave their Retiring Address during the session. The 4<sup>th</sup> General Session was filled with honoring and awarding hardworking members. Awards were given to State CDE Final Winners and Proficiency Awards. National Chapter Awards were given to honor and recognize outstanding chapters, winners of the Mindy Stringer Memorial Scholarship and Frances Mizell Scholarship were recognized, and Future Agribusinessman held the spotlight. We heard the impactful words of National Western Region Vice President, Sarah Draper, as she delivered her Keynote. Jordan Stowe, State Vice President, delivered her retiring address. To close out the 4<sup>th</sup> Session the 1<sup>st</sup> place Quartet, Zion Chapel, entertained the hearts of the members and guests present.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and final session of the 88<sup>th</sup> Alabama FFA State Convention began with inspiring words of Wade Gossett, State President, as he delivered his Retiring Address. Advisors and Parents of the 2015-2016 State Officers

were honored and recognized for their support. The State Officer Year in Review showed the travels and experiences they had as serving as a State Officer.

The election of the 2016-2017 State Officers was held. The 12 candidates had gone through 4 interviews and test for the Nomination Committee to select the best slate if officers to serve the Alabama FFA Association. The committee selected:

State President, Sierra Goodwin  
State Vice President, Ethan Mobley  
State Secretary, Ben Castleberry  
State Treasurer, Becky Hawkins  
State Reporter, Hannah Black  
State Sentinel, Torran Smith

After the installation of the 2016-2017 State Officers, the 2015-2016 retired in an emotional jacket hanging ceremony. There were 284 members receiving their State FFA Degree and 2020 FFA members, advisors, and guests attended the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama FFA State Convention. We, the 2016-2017 State Officers, hope to see you at the 89<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama State Convention next year!





By Sierra Goodwin  
President

# NLCSO

Imagine driving for five hours in the blazing hot Alabama heat on your way to the middle of nowhere, Raymond, MS, from Montgomery. Well, that was exactly what we did. We rode in two different vehicles down a seemingly endless interstate, stopping almost ten times along the way, to make it to Mississippi. Finally, after reaching the FFA camp, we were able to get settled in the cabins with our roommates for the week, the Mississippi state officers. They were an amazing officer team who kept us laughing the whole and taught some of us how to swing dance. After settled in, we heard that another state had arrived, Louisiana. They started pouring into the cabins one by one until we thought that they had brought the whole state with them! Come to find out, there were only ten officers. Indiana was the last state officer team to arrive with seven officers consisting of six young ladies and one young gentleman. Once every team had arrived, we kicked off the 2016 National Leadership Conference for State Officers with our amazing facilitators, Abbey Gretsch, Levy Randolph, and Ruth Ann Myers!

June 26- July 1 flew by in what felt like one day. From crossing “molten lava” to impersonating Morgan Freeman for a skit, we were constantly moving, being challenged, growing as team and family, and growing a people and leaders. We can say without a shadow of doubt that NLCSO was one of the greatest experiences we have had the honor to take part in, and that it fully prepared us for the year to come. Every single detour, Chinese fire drill, walk and talk, and every other activity that we did stoked the fires of our passion, challenged us to grow and think outside the box, and reminded us of why we joined the National FFA Organization and ran for state office.

Our facilitators helped to sharpen our facilitation skills, teamwork skills, communication skills, and creativity skills. Anytime they made a “mistake”, they would stop and tell us what went wrong and how to prevent it from happening. Their humbling honesty allowed us to connect with them, and learn everything we could from them. For example, Levy always had a smile on his face and would laugh to brighten the atmosphere. Abbey was down to earth, and she made it to where we looked at her as our friend not our facilitator. Ruth Ann could joke with the best of them and out arm wrestle all the girls and some of the boys! Describing what the facilitators have done for us and countless others is best explained through this quote, “*As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.*”- Nelson Mandela. We hope and are striving to do personify this quote for our members as Ruth Ann, Abbey, and Levy did for us.

NLCSO was a blast! It was one of a kind, and we will remember it forever. From Levy’s amazing brain teasers to Abbey’s one on one conversations with us, we will take the joy and laughter we found in those moments and use them to help us during our year of service. We want to say thank you to our facilitators, to the Alabama FFA Association and staff, and to Mrs. Castleberry for making it possible for us to take part in NLCSO because we could not have done it without you all! We are prepared, pumped, and ready to serve this year. We cannot wait to transform our purpose into action!



By Hannah Black  
Reporter

# DOLC

Every summer the state officer team presents a series of workshops to district officers to help them prepare for their Chapter Officer Leadership Workshops, or COLW. We kicked off the conference with an opening session, or as we called it Stop, to fit our Olympic theme of: Road to Rio. In Stop 1 we heard opening ceremonies from the state officers, a greeting from Mr. Paramore, and our ground rules for the week. We then moved into officer introductions and everyone's expectations for the week. Finally we went through a few activities to break the ice and get to know everyone. We closed out the first Stop with closing ceremonies from the state officers.

Our second stop was #hashtag with Ben Castleberry, all about how we use social media and how to represent ourselves. We kicked off the session with awesome opening ceremonies from the south district officers. We learned how to wear proper official dress and the right/wrong ways to represent ourselves. We closed out that session with closing from the south district officers. The third stop was #talkitout by Hannah Black. We opened the session with opening ceremonies from the North District officers. The whole session revolved around effective communication and how we can get better at knowing ourselves and knowing our teammates. The North District officers then did a great job of closing out our session. We had Q&A with the officers and reflections later that night that called the first day of DOLC to an end.

The state officers giving a flag raising ceremony kicked off Day two. The Central District officers had awesome opening ceremonies to kick off stop four. Our next stop was Squad Goals by Becky Hawkins. We learned all about teamwork and how we can communicate with our team to be able to work together better. The Central District officer team closed out our fourth stop. Our fifth session was #represent by Ethan Mobley. We focused on current agricultural issues and created skits to represent things like; immigration, GMOs, and the need for Ag teachers. Sierra Goodwin presented stop six, Robert's Rings of Order. We learned how to properly conduct a meeting by using trail mix to follow parliamentary procedure. Our seventh stop was #serveitout by Torran Smith. Torran did an awesome job of teaching us how to be true servant leaders and how to stay motivated this entire year.

Our last day of conference was started off with another flag raising by the state officers. We had a review of all of the workshops and a huge group activity. We had summaries of our workshops and a few gems and opps for each workshop. We ended the conference by planning COLWs, which were carried out the next week. We have an amazing group of District Officers this year that will transform the FFA bringing purpose to action!

# Touch the world one student at a time.



## Teach Agriscience!



by Ben Castleberry  
State Secretary

**The Alabama FFA  
Reporter  
State Officers 2014-2015**

President.....**Sierra Goodwin**  
Danville

Vice President.....**Ethan Mobly**  
Red Bay

Secretary..... **Ben Castleberry**  
Pell City

Treasurer.....**Becky Hawkins**  
Eufaula

Reporter.....**Hannah Black**  
Arab

Sentinel.....**Torran Smith**  
Reeltown

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Of the many “things to do” at the beach, snorkeling is one of my favorites. I enjoy getting a peek into the lives of the creatures living beneath the surface. Diving seems to be a little more intense as far as preparation and commitment. Between the changes in temperature, pressure, oxygen, and light, there is much to be done before diving in. Perhaps the least considered need is that of light. At a depth of about 600 feet, much of the light needed to navigate as a diver is lost and artificial light is a must. As prepared as one may be to “dive in”, without a source of light, even a professional scuba diver will not get far.

Speaking of diving in, we dove into our new positions as state officers as soon as State FFA Convention concluded on that amazing Friday in June. So far, serving as the 2016-2017 Alabama FFA State Secretary has been nothing but awesome, and I am grateful for the opportunity. This past week wrapped up my state officer duties for the summer, as the district officers facilitated the Central District Chapter Officer Leadership Workshops. This years COLW’s in the Central District were held at Pell City High School and Wetumpka High School. The district officers did an outstanding job running the show. The theme this year was Dive In, and we hope that your chapter officers were inspired to “Dive In” to their year of service motivated and ready to better their chapter, state association, and most importantly, our organization.

At COLW, I had the opportunity to talk with an FFA member who is ready to dive into his year as chapter president, Cason Davis from Pell City FFA. While talking to Cason, I asked him to describe his favorite thing about COLW. He said, “Coming back to COLW for the second year was so fun. I was able to catch up with some of the people from last year and also met some new, awesome people. My favorite part about this years COLW was competing for the Outstanding Chapter award. Being the competitive person that I

am, I really enjoyed it. I also loved all of the enthusiasm from the chapter officers.” Also while talking to Cason, I asked him why he is so passionate about FFA, and Cason stated, “Agriculture is something that I believe the world revolves around, and without FFA, American Agriculture would not be as strong. Personally, when starting high school, FFA was where I found my home. Our FFA family took me in as one of their own and for that I will be forever grateful. My Ag Teachers and FFA Family “threw” me into the ring of fire, made me step out of my comfort zone, and shaped into the person I am today.” I’m excited to see how Cason lets his light shine as he serves as a positive influence this year within his chapter.

Looking back at COLW and the whole summer in general, I am so excited for what else this year has in store. Throughout my year of service, I hope to keep in mind the main point of one of my state officer team’s activities from this summer—the importance of how we shine our light into others, whether it be shining our light through service, through happiness, or through whatever it may be. This summer, and at COLW in particular, I have been able to meet so many new faces who are so passionate about the work they are doing. Many members may not know it, but they are already shining their light into others, and that is something we should all be excited about.





# Q&A with the 2016-2017 Alabama FFA State Officer Team

by Torran Smith  
Sentinel

## Question 1: What is the main reason you joined FFA?



Sierra Goodwin,  
State President

Thinking back to seventh grade, I remember what cemented my course for the National FFA Organization. It was when I went with my sister to a livestock judging practice and sat in the back of the room waiting on her to finish, and the ag teacher, instead of pretending like I was not there, he included me in the practice. I was just the younger sister who had to tag along I though, but I was wrong because Mr. Fields told me that he saw something in me. I will be forever grateful for that moment. The moment that sparked my interest and desire to join FFA was also in the seventh grade when I was at home scrolling through the TV channels hoping to find something good on to watch when I stumbled across something that said National FFA Convention and Expo on RFDTV. I did not know what it was, so I clicked on it and was instantly entranced by the blue jackets that filled the screen and by the National FFA Officer who was speaking with so much emotion and passion. That is the main reason I joined FFA.



Ethan  
Mobley,  
State Vice  
-President

I joined the FFA in the 8th grade because for as long as I could remember I had searched for any opportunity to stand out from the crowd and lead.



Ben Castleberry,  
State Secretary

Well, growing up on a farm and coming from an agriculture influenced family, I always knew that I wanted to be apart of FFA, but I never knew that FFA would be something that would take me this far. I also never knew that I would discover my calling in life through FFA, which is to be an Agriculture Educator. When one of my Ag Teachers came to me in ninth grade, they saw potential in me and from then on, I truly knew that anything was possible.



Becky Hawkins,  
State Treasurer

Coming into high school I didn't know my place. Knowingly it was not going to be in sports or in the band; I just wanted to make a difference. I joined FFA truly just trying to see if I would fit. I always saw the antique tractors in the hometown parades and the string band performance were always incredible. Throughout the past 3 years I have gained a home and family through this organization and hopefully leaving my mark in high school.



Hannah  
Black, State  
Reporter

I had watched my brother compete in the String Band contest and even win state two years in a row before I was old enough to join FFA. When the time finally came for me to be able to compete I was overjoyed with the opportunity to participate. Even though the String Band contest was what originally got me involved in FFA I quickly fell in love with this organization and I don't know where I would be without it.



Torran Smith,  
State Sentinel

I was considered an athlete when I was entering high school, but I wanted to do something different. I didn't find the FFA, however the FFA did find me. I walked into Mr. Chamness' Agricultural Explorations class and the first thing he had me do was say the Mission Statement and that's when I fell in love with the FFA. The lessons I learned helped me on and off the field. I loved the agricultural aspect of the leadership development really sold me. I have enjoyed every year of my growth within the National FFA Organization.

## Question 2: What was your first thought when you were selected to serve as a State Officer?

**Sierra:** I thought I was in some type of dream or parallel universe. I mean there was no way that I was just elected State FFA President. After I remember that it was indeed really happening, indescribable joy and happiness filled me as I ran to give Wade a hug and to join my friends and teammates who I would be serving with over the coming year. Truthfully, it took it a while to set in that I had made state office, but once it did, I was amazed and extremely humbled to be elected serve and represent our amazing association and members, and to serve the organization that has changed my life and made me into who I am today.

**Ethan:** My very first thought upon election to State office in our Association was "How am I going to walk across that stage with all these tears blurring my vision?" After I got my act together I realized that I only had one year from that point to do everything I'd been planning to do for our Association and the members I had come to love so much; I had better keep that act together.

**Ben:** Running out on the stage during the last session of the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama FFA State Convention and being elected State Secretary was one of the best moments of my life. That feeling of achievement that came to my five fellow state officers and I is one that only comes around once in a life time, and I will cherish that moment forever.

**Becky:** I couldn't believe that it was me honestly. After realizing that it was my name, I was excited to serve the Alabama FFA Association in the year to come and that all the hard work and effort paid off. I was filled with emotion standing on stage next to 5 incredible leaders and taking it all in.

**Hannah:** When I heard Ivy say my name immediate joy filled my entire body, but the first sentence I remember thinking was, "Don't fall down, don't fall down!" When I was finally out on the stage I just remember feeling so thankful and I couldn't believe I had actually become a state officer.

**Torran:** My first thought when I was elected was I just accomplished my goal of being one of the Super Six of the Alabama FFA Association. I thought about the hard work and dedication I put in coming full circle and being worth all the sleepless nights. Once I reached out an almost tackled Whitney, my dream accomplishment was complete.

## Question 3: How will you make a positive impact in the lives of others in your year as a State Officer?

**Sierra:** I cannot say exactly what events or things I will do that will make a positive impact, but I can say that in everything that I do, I will have a positive attitude, positive personality, and bright smile. I will give 100% in everything I do and will make sure that every person I meet feels included, and sees me as a friend. I will always look to grow, to make someone else's day better, and to serve others. Wherever I go, I will always take a smile because a smile can change the world. I will always be there for anyone who needs me and will focus on what the members and the association need. I will make a positive impact by remembering why I ran for state office, and remembering everyone in the FFA who positively impacted my life and inspired me to do the same for others.

**Ethan:** I believe that I have learned a great deal about agriculture, service, and leading others through my FFA experience. I have no doubt that unless I pass that knowledge to others and use it to lead, then I have wasted every bit of it.

**Ben:** Throughout my year of service, I want to make an impact in the lives of others be being a friend. A phrase I like to use is, "Advocate Agriculture, Advocate Happiness." While being a young agriculturist and a leader in my organization, I also want to be a friend to everyone. I want to build relationships with all that I can. That is one of the things that makes our organization so unique, we get to build relationships with people who share the same passions, that will last a lifetime.

**Becky:** Being able to serve as a state officer is truly humbling. I hope to make an impact on the people I meet this year by showing them that their purpose matters and they have the obligation of fulfilling it. To show that when you shine brightly for others it gives them the reason to shine as well.

**Hannah:** I hope this year is full of fun memories and self improvement. Everywhere I go I want to make others feel included and spread a little bit of positivity! Agriculture is so important to all of our lives and I hope that I can help others come to that realization as well.

**Torran:** I want to be able to positively impact those that want to succeed within and outside this organization by showing them the light that someone shined upon me. The opportunities for greatness is born on growth and discovery. The discovery of your opportunity of growth is one that you should jump on. Greatness is something we all seek, but positive growth is something we must have in life.

**Question 4: Alright, Last Question; What is your favorite moment from this summer as a State FFA Officer?**

**Sierra:** There is no way to choose just one! I would say that my favorite memory from this summer would have to be when we were elected state officers. That moment when I was standing with the rest of the candidates waiting for Wade to announce the new president was indescribable. I mean it felt like everything had left my body, and I was numb like an out of body experience until he started to say Danville. That was when everything hit me at once, and I took off running towards Wade. Getting to hug one of my friends and to know that I was elected state officer, was a dream come true. After hugging Wade, I remember joining my new teammates our group hug, trying not to fall as I had been pushed in the middle, and hearing Torran yell, “ We’re state officers!” was amazing. I will always remember that moment for the rest of my life and be forever grateful for the great unknowns and personal growth that my team and I will be experiencing this year getting to represent the Alabama FFA Association and getting to meet and know the members who make up our association and our organization.

**Ethan:** My favorite moment from my summer as a State officer was without a doubt the final night of the National Leadership Conference for State Officers that we attended in Raymond, MS. Our entire team felt the desire to come together, and pour out the true honest secrets we had never shared with anyone. That time of total honesty and reflection with my team showed me that I will never forget the other five individuals that I serve with, and always keep them in my life.

**Ben:** From being scared to death riding around with Ethan Mobley in his Mustang, while giving him a tour of Pell City, to eating Paramore raised Angus cattle for Torran’s birthday, I couldn’t pick a favorite. This summer has been busy and crazy, but definitely the best summer of my life.

**Becky:** Traveling with my teammates this summer has had uncountable cherished memories and it is hard just choosing one. One of my favorite moments is when we received our Association jackets. As usual I come in the room crying and high with emotions. I will never forget our excitement as we put on our new, stiff blue corduroys. As I will wear the blue jacket for many adventures to come, but it will always have the memory of the first time we zipped it

up.

**Hannah:** There have been so many amazing memories this year it's hard for me to pick just one! But if I had to choose one it would have to be going to the movies while we were at Blast Off. The movie theatre was right next to our hotel, so one night we decided to go see Finding Dory. We had been working hard all day and being able to relax and have a good time with my team was so much fun. It was definitely a night I'll never forget!

**Torran:** All the moments that we have had were amazing. We have laughed from Montgomery to Mississippi and from Auburn to Columbiana. I have loved getting to better know the team that God blessed me with as a State FFA Officer. My birthday celebration at Mr. Paramore’s parents house was amazing. Those memories however do not top the DOLC memory of the all the State and District Officers pouring water on each other throughout the entire ropes course activity. They really opened up after that that for the remainder of the conference which I thought was awesome! “Don’t Count the Days, Make the Days Count.” -Muhammad Ali



by **Ethan Mobley**  
Vice President

Advocating for Agriculture is one of the most critical responsibilities of our Association and its members. The entire agricultural industry faces issues, new and old, that emerges and recess as often as the rows in our fields. Country of origin labeling, immigration, water rights, food security, and of course genetically modified organisms are a small handful of what our industry of agriculture faces daily. As officers and members of our Association, we must stay informed about these issues, conventional farming practices, and the different perspectives of each in order to relay that information to the public.

Truths are hidden too often from those that aren't daily involved in agriculture, and become increasingly difficult to stand for. The majority of our members across all 50 states live in rural non-farm communities, meaning that they may not live in a large urban area, but are still not involved with agriculture daily. The passing of generation to generation has moved the large majority of Americans away

from the farm; Sometimes they are only moved across the street, but the truth about agriculture is still hidden. This change across time has created the present need to "cross the street" and learn about today's conventional farming practices. We may all drive past farms on a daily basis, or even detect the sounds and smells of some of their byproducts, but never know what goes on in their work.

My current placement Supervised Agricultural Experience, poultry production, was started when I asked my current boss to tour his farm. The short months since have turned that tour into a job, a few paychecks, and countless life lessons from a farm. Recreating that experience and those lessons is a task that our chapter has recently undertaken to train our team of officers. For our chapter officers to better advocate for agriculture they first had to become informed. In order to establish that foundation, our officer team traveled across the state to visit a number of agricultural facilities. This agricultural education day started at 5:30 am, with a three hour trek to the town of Hokes Bluff. We rendezvoused with our past State FFA President Wade Gossett and current North District Secretary Coleman Lett to assist in leading the day long tour. We first visited two recently constructed six hundred foot broiler poultry houses. We learned about the science of these houses and the well-constructed techniques that enable our farms to meet the demands of poultry consumers

across the world. We next learned about the till-free row crop techniques used on the LEAF farm, along with a look at a well built cattle chute. A quick view from the mountain at the heart of the farm lead to visiting a unique element of the town of Hokes Bluff. A small vineyard and bottling facility resides near the center of the East Alabama town and showcased a home-grown company with modern industrial techniques. To showcase team building, and one final keynote of the trip, our team caravanned to Cherokee rock village, in the neighboring county. Spectacular views, cave exploring, and memories to never forget ended the visit, and taught our officers many things they can use to better serve our chapter and community.





*Alabama FFA State Officers in Raymond, MS at NLCSO*



*Central District snapped a selfie at their COLW!*



*State & Districts Officers at the 31st Annual DOLC!*



*State Officers receiving their jackets at Blast Off Training!*



*Central District Officers at DOLC!*



*North District and State Officers at COLW!*



*South District winning the torch as COLW!*



*AL, MS, IN, & LA at NLC SO with awesome facilitators!*



We, as State Officers, are humbled and thankful that we get to take part in this year of service. We have had an incredible summer and cannot wait to see what else is in store!

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