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2017-2018 Alabama State Officer Team and Delegates to the 90th Annual National FFA Convention and Expo.



Alabama FFA members receive their American FFA Degree. This is the highest honor a member can receive within the National FFA Organization.



Beneath the Rising Sun

by Cameron
Catrett
President

I Can. We Will was the theme of the 90th National FFA Convention and Expo held in Indianapolis, Indiana from October 25-28, 2017. Over 67,000 FFA members from the United States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands came together filling FFA Way with a sea of blue. This is the second consecutive year that the National Convention has been held in Indianapolis. Annually, National Convention serves as a time to celebrate the accomplishments of members, teachers, and the agricultural industry through competitive events, educational tours, leadership workshops, volunteer activities, concerts, rodeos, and so much more. As the Alabama FFA State President, I had the distinct honor of meeting with the United States Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, for a small-group roundtable discussion with nine other states' association representatives. We discussed the importance of Career and Technical Education and the impact of The National FFA Organization.

FFA is the world's largest student-led organization. The governing body, made up of 475 voting delegates, met during the 90th National Convention and Expo. Delegates served on six different committees, debating issues brought forth by state associations and creating proposals for consideration by the national board. Ten delegates represented Alabama's nearly 15,000 FFA members. Alabama's six state officers, in addition to our three district presidents and one at-large member, served as Alabama's voting delegate team. Will Jordan, Alabama FFA State Reporter, described his delegate experience by saying, "This was my second year serving as a delegate and it was just as remarkable as the last. The opportunity to network with other state officers and returning delegates, as well as the opportunity to make decisions and vote on proposals that would positively impact our organization was humbling." As a Discussion Group Leader and returning delegate, I enjoyed seeing the intense passion each and every delegate showed regarding the future of agriculture and the National FFA Organization. Jasey Black, Alabama FFA State

Treasurer said, "It is very exciting to see peers leading discussions, chairing committees, and sharing opinions when drafting committee reports. I loved being reminded that we are a student-led organization and seeing states come together in order to achieve common goals."

Delegates worked hard and played hard. This was my fourth National FFA Convention and second as a delegate. Being on the delegate floor will always be remembered as one of the most electrifying convention experiences; unlike any other. The craze and excitement on the delegate floor can be described as life-changing – uniting delegates as one. "The flow of energy could be felt onto the floor of Banker's Life Fieldhouse. The music and lights added to the energy and kept the delegates dancing and singing well before each session began," said Banx O'Barr, Alabama North District FFA President.

National Convention general sessions provided inspiring messages and several opportunities to celebrate the accomplishments of fellow members. Trent Thomas from the Goshen FFA Chapter was featured on-stage as a Poultry Proficiency Finalist and was named the National Winner. Eleven Alabamians received their American FFA Degree including past state officers Cassidy Catrett, Ivy Harbin, and Jordan Stowe. The Alabama Delegation had much to celebrate including the recognition of Andy Chamness, Alabama FFA Executive Secretary, being awarded the Honorary American FFA Degree and Alabama FFA State Advisor, Jacob Davis, being recognized for his service to the National FFA Board.





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Members enjoyed hearing motivational messages from retiring national officers and keynote speakers including Laila Ali, Mick Ebeling, and Jon Petz. Gracen Sims, Alabama FFA State Secretary especially enjoyed the national officer team's retiring addresses and being challenged and motivated by session speakers. John Crawford, Alabama FFA State Vice-President vividly remembers the words of National President David Townsend's retiring address and summarizes them by saying, "We can choose to live each day for the betterment of ourselves or we can choose to use our gifts and talents for the good of those around us." Caitlin Nolin, Alabama South District FFA President and Maggie Edwards, Woodland FFA Chapter President, agreed that David Townsend's challenge to "find H.O.M.E." was inspiring. H.O.M.E. was defined as Helping Others Maximize Experiences.

Members witnessed history being made in the closing session of the 90th National FFA Convention and Expo when the new National Officer team was elected and installed. Breanna Holbert, of California, became the first African American female to be elected National FFA President. Jordan Brown, Alabama Central District FFA President said, "I will never forget seeing the faces of the newly installed national officers. In that moment, their hard work paid off and their excitement was contagious."

After several action packed days, members returned energized and motivated to make a positive impact in their homes and communities. When reflecting on his convention experience, Alabama FFA State Sentinel Bryce Hendricks described what this year's theme meant to him, "I realized that *I*

Can. We Will means that I can as an individual; however we will serve our organization more effectively whenever we come together as one unit."

Whether from the suburbs of a major city or the fields of a rural town, individually each member can do great things. When members zip up the blue jacket, we unite as one and that is when we have the power to make the greatest impact. *I Can. We Will.* Join us in Montgomery for the 90th Annual Alabama FFA State Convention on June 6-8, 2018. We look forward to seeing you there!

Serve Always,
Cameron



Alabama FFA State President Cameron Catrett was chosen to serve on a special round table Discussion panel with United States Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos during the 90th Annual National FFA Convention and Expo.





Through the Eyes of a Delegate

By Bryce Hendricks
Sentinel

Imagine waking up each morning for one week at 5:00 a.m. Working tirelessly throughout the day and finally ending your last meeting at 11:00 p.m. This was the life of a delegate at the 90th annual National Convention & Expo. Although it was busy, serving as a delegate was a great experience to be able to network with 474 hard-working individuals. Each session, the delegate body would have the opportunity to stand directly in front of the stage on what is known as the “delegate floor”. This was a great chance for us as delegates to be able to meet with members from other states. The Alabama FFA Association is allotted 10 delegates out of the 475. These delegate allocations are determined by each association’s percent of overall organizational membership. Our delegates included: State President, Cameron Catrett; State Vice-President, John Crawford; State Secretary, Gracen Sims; State Treasurer, Jasey Black; State Reporter, Will Jordan; State Sentinel, Bryce Hendricks; North District President, Banx O’Barr; Central District President, Jordan Brown; South District President, Caitlyn Nolin; and Delegate at Large, Maggie Edwards.

We each served on a delegate committee to ultimately improve the National FFA Organization. There were six committees including: Committee for the Nature and Structure of Delegate Work, Committee for an Agricultural Education Career Development Event, Committee for Effective Communication With Members, Committee for Accommodating Students with Special Needs, Committee for the Inclusion of Unpaid Supervised Agricultural Experience Programs, Committee for Chapter Member Programs and Opportunities. Each of these committees were able to work together to form reports positively impacting our organization and its members. Being a delegate was truly a rewarding experience that we will never forget.

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LOVE WHAT YOU DO.
DO WHAT YOU LOVE. **TEACH
AG**



Woods, Water, & Wildlife FFA Day at Lanark Park



By Gracen Sims
Secretary and Will

On September 6th and 7th, 2017, FFA members from across Alabama headed to the Woods, Water, & Wildlife FFA day at Lanark Park. This is one of many events members look forward to attending every year. The event is sponsored by Alabama Farmer's Cooperative and First South Farm Credit.

This year, FFA students were excited to meet agriculturists, who share the same passion for agriculture as FFA members. Students had the opportunity to meet Cooper Nichols, Soil Scientist, USDA-NRCS, James Mason, Soil Scientist, USDA-NRCS, and George Otto, Ecological Site Specialist, USDA-NRCS. Members were excited to learn about soil profiles and the many jobs of a soil scientist. The knowledge gained in this lesson on soils can be a valuable tool for FFA members when selecting sites to: build homes, plant fields, and many other uses.



He explained the process that allows the production of hybrid catfish grow in size to be about one to two pounds. This weight is ideal for the five ounce filets that are sold at most restaurants.



Members met Gregory Whitis, Extension Specialist-Aqua culturist, Alabama Cooperative Extension System. He has been working with the catfish industry for over thirty years, and is passionate about aquaculture. Mr. Whitis enjoys helping catfish farmers overcome problems they face daily on their farms.





Woods, Water, & Wildlife FFA Day at Lanark Park



By Gracen Sims
Secretary and Will

Next, members met Tammy Smith, Carol Alford, and Blake Roper. These Alabama Wildlife Federation employees enjoy teaching students about agriculture in nature. Members were given a tour around the park to learn about different types of trees in Alabama and how to identify them. FFA members can use the knowledge they gained from this experience in the future, whether they decide to pursue a career in the timber industry or are simply land owners with timber on their property.



Members met Kristen Irons, Alabama Wildlife Federation; she informed us about controlled forest fires and allowed us to meet numerous animals she cares for.

Members were excited to visit the hands-on discovery hall located inside the Nature-Plex. There, they were able to interact with numerous nature displays. Members enjoyed learning about honey production, various types of insects and reptiles, and about species of animals that are unique to our state. Woods, Water, & Wildlife FFA Day, is a day members look forward to attending each year as they learn about agriculture and its industry. Alabama FFA would like to thank everyone who makes this event possible, as they are growing the minds of young agriculturists, who will soon be responsible for feeding this growing world.





STATE OFFICERS ATTEND AUBURN FOOTBALL GAME

by Jasey Black
Treasurer

As a state officer, we travel all over the state for many different reasons. On some occasions, we can pair up or enlist the help of district officers in order to fulfill our official business but it's great when we have the opportunity to get together outside of official business, like when the state officer team attended the Auburn game on September 30th against Mississippi State University. We arrived in Auburn a few hours before the game and had a wonderful meal at a local Mexican restaurant called Laredo's. My dad, Jason secured the tickets so he and my sister stayed to eat with us. Dad graduated from Auburn so he told all kinds of stories about being our age at Auburn and even told us that his Spanish class used to come to Laredo's to hang out and study while getting to practice some of the language.

Once we'd finished eating and catching up, we all split up with tickets in hand on our way to the game. If you've ever been to Auburn on game day you know how crowded it can be, especially for foot traffic. We had to come in separate cars from Laredo's which meant there was a lot of coordinating done to even meet up with the rest of the group. Finally, we found each other, got our bags checked, and made it into the stadium. For some, this was the first time they'd ever been to Jordan-Hare and we joked that Will Jordan had to be related to Shug Jordan since he seemed to know everyone we came into contact with.

As we made our way through the crowd, the excitement grew. The band performed their pregame show and Spirit, our

2017 Auburn eagle, made his flight around the stadium. The section where we sat overlooks the campus of Auburn and are the same seats my family has purchased seasonally since I was a baby. My grandfather, whom we called Poppy, started buying them as a way to introduce his grandchildren to Auburn football. Allie and I used to hang precariously over the side and look as far as we could see. Poppy would bang his foot on the metal and whistle whenever the jumbo Tron would call for more noise and Dad always dances like nobody's watching when the band plays anything from the eighties.

All of the memories I have of these seats made it even better getting to share them with some of my best friends. The game itself was very exciting with Auburn dominating the Bulldogs 49-10. As the night came to a close, we all said our goodbyes and parted for separate parts of the state, and I took home a new memory of the stadium seats I grew up in.





2017 Joint-Leadership Development Conference

by John Craford, Vice President

The 2017 Alabama Joint-Leadership Development Conference (JLDC) was an absolute success! Compiling 9 of Alabama's CTE+CTSOs and more than 5,400 members from each organization, students gathered from all across the state of Alabama in the city of Birmingham to multiply their leadership and gain skills and materials to further impact their schools and communities.

The two-day Conference was filled with exciting activities, awesome workshops, inspiring key-notes, and amazing performances.

The conference kicked off Monday with the Alabama FFA State Officers facilitating workshops consisting of leadership development, team-building, agricultural education, and mission statements. Later that evening, Anthony O' Neal (Top 5 Youth-Speaker in the United States) delivered an encouraging key-note about decisions and their impacts. Following his presentation, CTE+CTSO members were able to kick it back and have some fun as Jaycob Curlee, former America's Got Talent contestant and Alabama native, rocked the house with a concert with the JLDC House Band.

The next morning, members from all over the state once again woke up ready to learn and experience what it truly means to multiply leadership. Attendees were able to hear first thing about essential skills from key-note speakers Harriet Turk and Kelly Barnes.

To wrap up the day, members were then given the chance to go and explore the many opportunities that the Alabama career-force and universities have to offer at the Career Show. With more than 70 of Alabama's leading employers, CTE+CTSO members were able to interact one-on-one with them to build networking and ultimately learn more about the area and field that they are most interested in.

All-in-all, the 2017 Alabama Joint-Leadership Development Conference was an amazing opportunity. The 2017-2018 Alabama FFA State Officer team was truly encouraged to see members from not only our organization, but all facets of CTSOs, on fire and excited to change the world for the better!



Alabama State Department of Education, Ed Richardson, Interim State Superintendent of Education

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