Little did I know June 8th, 2017 would become the day my life would greatly be impacted and changed forever. That day, I was selected to serve Alabama FFA as the 2017-2018 State Secretary. The FFA members, ag teachers, state staff, agricultural leaders, Alabama farmers, state officers from across the country, past and current national officers, and most of all my teammates; impacted my life and have been such a huge blessing to me. Through these wonderful people I learned how to be a better friend, I learned how to love those around me without condition, I learned how to forgive, I learned how to be a teammate, I learned about FFA chapters from across the state and saw the neat ways they were positively impacting their community, I met amazing influential people, and of course I learned a lot about agriculture! These are all experiences and memories I hold close to my heart and loved being a part of.

One of my favorite parts of being a state officer were the Chapter visits. I absolutely loved meeting the members and the students in agricultural education classes. It was great hearing about their Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAEs), as well as their Career/Leadership/Talent Development Events (CDE/LDE/TDE). I enjoyed the interactive activities that would bring out each student’s bright personality, and I loved teaching about agriculture in Alabama. Every FFA member is important and makes an impact. The members are the roots of the FFA Organization.

The 90th Annual Alabama FFA State Convention began on June 5th, 2018. My team and I began to see the hard work and dedication of FFA members, advisors, state staff, sponsors, and our own hard work all come together. It was amazing to see everyone that we had met throughout the year all together in one place to celebrate each FFA member’s hard work and achievements though out the year. We celebrated ninety years of Alabama FFA State conventions! On the final day of convention, Friday, June 8th, my team and I had to trade in our blue corduroy jackets for alumni blazers. I pray my team and I made a difference in member’s lives and positively impacted our state association. I will never forget all the memories made, and I am forever grateful for this amazing organization!

Stay Forever Blue,

Gracen Sims
Alabama FFA, State Secretary
2017-2018
I Can. We Will was the theme of the 90th Annual Alabama FFA State Convention held in Montgomery during June 6-8, 2018. Over 2,000 FFA members from across the state came together, flooding our state’s capital with a sea of blue. Annually, State 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, and so much more. As the State President, I was able to attend and represent the association at several meetings during state convention including the Alabama FFA Foundation, Alabama FFA Board of Directors, and the Alabama Team AgEd Committee. At these meetings, I was able to advocate for agriculture and discuss the importance of Career and Technical Education and the impact of the National FFA Organization among many influential individuals. Our association has a strong fleet of supporters that wants to see us succeed and grow.

State Convention general sessions provided inspiring messages and several opportunities to celebrate the accomplishments of fellow members. Congratulations to all CDE, LDE, and TDE participants as well as our proficiency winners! On Wednesday afternoon, the delegates voted to approve 269 members to receive the State FFA Degree. This is the highest degree that a state association can bestow upon its members.

Members enjoyed hearing motivational messages from the retiring state officer team, as well as keynote messages from former National FFA Officers, Matt Lohr and Deshawn Blanding. Whether it was a challenge to staying committed, taking things one day at a time, finding your purpose and joy in life, or gathering a new perspective, each member had several messages that they could relate to and apply to their life.

After several action-packed days, members returned energized and motivated to make a positive impact in their homes and communities. Hen reflecting back on my convention experience, I realized that the theme 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 corduroy jacket, we unite as one and that is when we have the power to make the greatest impact.

Serve Always,
Cameron
Your 2017-2018 state officers arrived in Montgomery for state convention on June 3rd with plenty of plans and feelings of excitement about the week ahead. This was what we’d been waiting on since the moment we heard our names called one year before.

There was even more planning to be done when we arrived and it felt like we never stopped preparing for every possible situation. Which is exactly why our state convention runs so smoothly. These planning sessions were a wonderful way to spend time with the other officers in our final week together. We supported each other through retiring address practice, running over sessions, and preparing ourselves to hang up that coveted blue jacket.

The week passed by in a blur with sponsor luncheons, past state officer luncheons, radio interviews, and television interviews. I believe one of the best parts about being a state officer is the opportunity to represent your association through all of these different avenues. We each enjoyed getting to share pieces about our week from our own point of view.

The 90th Alabama FFA State Convention was the best yet (in my humble opinion). With over 1,500 members in attendance, there’s no way it could've been anything but awesome. Your 2017-2018 officers had a great time mingling with members, presenting awards, and speaking with passion on topics near and dear to our hearts. It’s amazing to see how quickly a year can fly by when you're having fun serving an organization that’s worthwhile.

Thank you Alabama FFA for an amazing, humbling, and worthwhile year. This experience is one that I will always be thankful for and will never forget. The National FFA Organization is truly the best student organization in the world and I am happy to have a small part in its success.

Serve Always,
Jasey Black
As the newly elected State Officers of the Alabama FFA Association we had the opportunity to attend the first State Officer Summit, held in our Nation’s Capital, Washington, DC, July 22-26,2018. We started off our week by stopping by the Arlington National Cemetery. At the cemetery, we were able to witness with honor the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. While at Arlington we also viewed the eternal flame that stands by John F. Kennedy’s memorial, and the 400,000 plus soldiers honored at the cemetery. The purpose of our trip was not simply to take in the history and historic sites of our capitol. Throughout the week, we attended numerous leadership-training workshops that concentrated on advocacy. The state officer summit hosted by the National FFA Organization allowed 51 of the 52 state FFA associations to come together and have a voice on Capitol Hill. State Officers from across the nation were sent to put these skills to action; each state was able to speak to several of their congressional representatives. Andy Chamness, Alabama FFA Executive Secretary noted, “How many times does a seventeen or eighteen year old have the opportunity to meet with congressional leaders and advocate for agriculture? How many students have that confidence and skill set? FFA members do, and that is why American Agriculture will stand solid because these young leaders are part of that inspiring task. I am so proud of our six state officers from Alabama and the work they are doing.” As we toured our National Mall, we were given examples of advocates, including: Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and the many soldiers who fought throughout history by having the opportunity to visit iconic monuments such as the World War I and II, Korean War, and Vietnam memorials. We also had the honor to visit the Lincoln, Jefferson, FDR, and Dr. King memorials as well as see the Washington monument and the Capitol Building. The 300 State Officers who attended the summit were fortunate enough to hear from Sonny Perdue, United States Secretary of Agriculture. While visiting, Mr. Perdue spoke to us about the future of agriculture being in good hands. Through this conference, State Officers from all fifty states and Puerto Rico were able to come together for one purpose: to further their knowledge of agriculture through advocacy.
As president and vice-president, Maggie Edwards and I participated in the State Leadership Conference. The purpose of this conference is to educate leadership delegates about the process of delegation. We reviewed the proposals for alterations to our organization offered to the delegation from state associations and National FFA Staff. As delegates, we received two extra days of training in order to ensure our knowledge of the proposals, prior to those proposals being discussed and voted on by a larger delegate body at the 91st National FFA Convention. We took part in deciding the committees that will meet at the National Convention and Expo, in October. Maggie will be serving as a sentinel on the committee for the evaluation of agricultural opportunities within FFA programs and activities. I have the opportunity and responsibility to serve as chair on the committee to increase and improve the relevancy of FFA alumni and supporters. As our week came to a close, the presidents and vice-presidents of all associations represented, attended an Alumni and Supporters breakfast at the United States Department of Agriculture. Gaining this new knowledge, makes us confident that we can better our association. The team and I are very grateful for this opportunity to learn and look forward to continuing our year of service and apply our new skills here at home. While we were continuing our training the four state officers who were not in this portion of the delegate process continued their training by attending a briefing from White House Staff in the Executive Building of the White House. Ethan Phillips, State Treasurer said, “What an honor to be able to be in the White House knowing that the President of the United States is that close.” On that particular day the President was meeting just across from where FFA members met with the European Union to discuss issues that directly relate to agriculture. This set of officers also had the opportunity to tour the National Museum of American History and see the Sweet Heart FFA Jacket on display in the Smithsonian.

All six Alabama FFA State Officers, the three District Presidents and one FFA member at large will represent the Alabama Delegation at the 91st National FFA Convention in October, where the delegate work that begin here at our summit will be further discussed and voted on by the entire delegate assembly.
Your 2018-2019 Alabama FFA State Officers:
The Alabama FFA State President, is Summer Parker. Summer is from the South District coming from the Enterprise FFA Chapter. She is a senior at Enterprise High School.

Maggie Edwards, Alabama FFA State Vice President is from the Central District and the Woodland FFA Chapter. She is a freshman at Southern Union State Community College.

Alabama FFA State Secretary is Matthew Wilson from the Central District and the Horseshoe Bend FFA Chapter. He is a freshman at Southern Union State Community College.

Ethan Phillips, Alabama FFA State Treasurer is from the Central District and the Dadeville FFA Chapter. He is a senior at Dadeville High School.

Alabama FFA State Reporter is Preston Hughes from the North District and the East Lawrence FFA Chapter. He is a senior at East Lawrence High School.

Kalyn Rouse, Alabama FFA State Sentinel is from the North District and the Skyline FFA Chapter. She is a senior at Skyline High School.

The 2018-2019 Alabama FFA State Officers were elected on June 8, 2018 at the 90th annual Alabama FFA State Convention. The officers went through multiple interviews and test to get them to that exact moment. The moment when the convention lights are glowing, the famous “Chicago Bulls” theme song is playing, the members in the audience are yelling and excited, and lastly, the moment when all the candidates are anxiously waiting backstage for their name to be called. As team members names began to be called, the anticipation kept building. From sentinel all the way to president, we each ran onto that stage full of excitement! Being a state officer is something that we have all dreamed about since we began our FFA journey. It is hard to believe that those dreams have come true. As the convention came to a close, there we stood. Six brand new state officers, who were ready to embark on this new adventure.

As soon as we were elected, we got right to work with our leadership trainings. The week after state convention we attended a training with all the state officers of the Alabama Career and Technical Organizations, following that we attended Base Camp in Montgomery. The next week called for a road trip to Raymond, Mississippi. We attended Checkpoint 1 conference with the Louisiana and Mississippi State Officers, which was held at the Mississippi FFA Center.

After the officers finished up their trainings, it was time for us to train the district officers! We facilitated the first annual High Point Conference this year at Mt. Cheaha! Gathered at this conference were the North, Central, and South District Officer teams, state staff, advisory council members, district specialists, National Officer Candidate, Jordan Stowe, and the six state officers! Following High Point Conference, state officers were broken up and sent with their own districts for Chapter Officer Leadership Workshop! After COLW, state officers were Washington D.C. bound! Our team got to attend the first annual State Officer Summit. This was an incredible experience with over 300 state officers nationwide gathered for this organization.

As the State Vice President, I would personally like to thank the members and the advisors of the Alabama Association. Without you, none of this would be possible. We state officers do what we do because we have a passion to serve. My favorite quote is, “live to serve and not to be served.” As my team gets ready to buckle down for our year of ser-
vice, be on the lookout for us state officers. We will be traveling from school to school all year long to advocate for our organization and the agriculture industry. Along our journey, our team has become like a family. We have grown individually, as well as a team. From the long nights and the early mornings, we have already accomplished so much since we were elected. With two officers in North Alabama, one in South Alabama, and three in Central Alabama, I know that our team is ready to serve members all across our great state! We look forward to meeting you all this year and we cannot to serve as Alabama FFA State Officers!

Serve humbly,
Maggie Edwards
Alabama FFA State Vice President
As Alabama FFA State Officers, our goal is to promote the importance of this organization and enable the success of its members during this, our year of service. Throughout this summer the state officers have experienced many trainings designed to prepare us to meet and even exceed that goal. One of the first was Checkpoint, formally known as NLCSO. State officers from Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi came together at the FFA center located in Raymond, Mississippi. Here we had sessions focusing on public speaking, workshop preparation, and facilitation. One highlight of Checkpoint was the opportunity to meet and network with other state officers. It was evident that we all share the same passion for this organization and that there is much to be gained through our collaborative effort. This reaffirmed our belief in the power of relationships, unity, and the shared vision of a bright future for the FFA. Our Checkpoint facilitators were former national officers, Ruth Ann Myers and Sydney Snider. This experience to network with other state officers and learn about their state’s FFA organization is one that we will not forget. The lessons learned and relationships made will help us throughout our year of service and as we prepare for our futures.
Right after being elected state officer you immediately hit the ground running. The Monday after state convention is the start of the State Officer Leadership Seminar (SOLTS). SOLTS brings together all the career technical state officers from Alabama to go through workshops and develop skills that will help us throughout our year of service. Being able to sit down with state officers from other organizations was a great experience because we got to talk with people who have the same passions as us, but chose to use different organizations as their platforms. Directly after SOLTS ended we began our Basecamp. Basecamp was facilitated by former national Eastern Region VP Ruth Ann Myers. Basecamp was all about developing and coming together as a team, knowing your strengths and weaknesses and how to work off of them, and going over models of personal development that we should look back on throughout our year of service. The experience of talking to the other state officer teams and getting to know our team better definitely was an amazing start to our year as state officers.
This year so far as state officers we have gathered a wealth of knowledge that will forever be with us! From countless hours of workshops and learning with our teammates, to now being able to take this information that we have learned, and using it by helping our district and chapter officers in the state. The first time we had the opportunity to use this knowledge was during our high point conference at Mt. Cheaha State Park - what a fantastic time we had! We were given the opportunity to present our workshops to the district officers. The following week they would be able to present their workshops to our chapter officers at our Chapter Officer Leadership Workshops (COLW’s) that were being held all over the state in each district.

At the COLW’s the district officers were given the grand opportunity to take what they already knew, and even some new things that they learned the previous week, and present their workshops to the chapter officers from their respective districts. During the COLW’s the chapter officers participate in activities, collaborate with other officers in team building activities, and they got to listen to a guest speaker. The COLW’s are a great way to help both the district and chapter officers. This can help the district officers in presenting workshops, activities, and other things in a more comfortable manner. The other reasons we hold COLW’s is so that the chapter officers all across the state are given the opportunity to grow themselves as a leader, and to help grow and strengthen their team. The chapter officers can also take back the information they have learned that week to help promote their chapter, better their officer team, and to AGvocate for agriculture from a new perspective!

Throughout my entire so far, the most humbling experience for me is when I sat back in the background watching the district officer present their workshops to the chapter officers. It warms my heart to see that once my year of service is over there will be so many great and intelligent leaders in agriculture! I love getting the opportunity to watch many chapter officers grow and get closer with their team along with other chapter officer teams. I am truly blessed to be able to serve as a state officer this year to help promote agriculture in my local chapter, in my district, and also in our great association and our national organization! Thank you Alabama FFA for truly making this year of service one to remember! Gold and Blue Forever.
During the second week of July, district officers, state officers, and state staff gathered at Mt. Cheaha State Park to kick off the inaugural High Point Conference, formerly known as the District Officer Leadership Conference. The purpose of this conference was the same as DOLC, educate the 18 district officers on how to present effective workshops at their respective Chapter Officer Leadership Workshops. The 6 state officers, including myself, presented their workshops on different topics to portray needed information, such as how to set up and present workshops, how to give effective elevator speeches in many different scenarios, how to advocate for agriculture, and how to find and make work their own team’s dynamic. Also during High Point, the district officers received their district jackets and polos! The state and district officers had the opportunity to walk the trail to see the beauty from atop the highest point in Alabama.

Going along with the theme of Toy Story, district officers enjoyed some friendly competition over who was the best district, with The Alien being their prize. Along with learning valuable information, these district officers developed connections and friendships with people from all over the state. We all also had the opportunity to learn kayaking safety and wilderness survival tips from the awesome staff at Mt. Cheaha. In the end, the first High Point Conference was a success and we enjoyed every second of facilitating, learning, reflecting, and connecting!

Keep Shining,
Kalyn Rouse
2018-19 AL State Sentinel