

Celebrate Kansas FFA

More than 65,000 FFA members, alumni and guests are gathered in Indianapolis, Ind., for the 89th National FFA Convention & Expo, which runs through October 22. Kansas FFA members join their peers from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to live out the year's motto "Transform Purpose to Action." Kansans are encouraged to virtually join the opening convention session beginning Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. CDT, www.ffa.org/convention.

"FFA members transform their purpose into action by making their voices heard and by educating others on the importance of agriculture and growing our resources every day," said Taylor McNeel, a student at Southern Arkansas University who is serving as 2015-16 National FFA President. "During the convention and expo, we can learn from one another how we can continue to grow leaders, strengthen agriculture and build our communities."

During the week Kansas FFA members will participate in service projects, share their musical talents in the national band, chorus and talent, compete in national career development events, interview for chapter and proficiency awards, experience motivational speakers and fulfilling workshops, and interact with industry leaders at the Expo.

Among those in attendance will be Bethany Schifferdecker of Girard, Kan. Schifferdecker is representing the Kansas FFA Association as the 2016 National FFA Officer candidate. Schifferdecker served as State FFA Vice President in 2014–2015. She is the daughter of Mark and Nancy Schifferdecker. Additionally, Kurt Dillon is beginning his term on the National FFA Board of Directors. Dillon is the agricultural education program consultant and Kansas FFA advisor for the Kansas State Department of Education and works in partnership with the Kansas Department of Agriculture to enhance and support agricultural education including FFA.

Kansas agricultural education programs have seen growth over the last several years. Building from last year's successful launch of five new agriculture education programs at Bluestem, Emporia, North Lyon County, Southern Lyon County and Sylvan-Lucas Unified, KDA would like to formally recognize Wichita Southeast, Stanton County, Pratt Skyline, Shawnee Mission South, Brewster and Independence for understanding the importance of school-based agricultural education and initiating programs in their schools this academic year.

The Kansas FFA Association was chartered by the National FFA Organization in 1928 and has a current membership of 9,059 members in 186 chapters. FFA is found in both rural and urban areas with chapters located in or near the cities of Garden City, Hays, Hutchinson, Lawrence, Manhattan, Newton, Olathe, Pittsburg, Salina, and Topeka. FFA members can be found in 91 of the 105 counties across Kansas.

"The Kansas Department of Agriculture is committed to helping grow agriculture in Kansas, and a trained workforce and young people interested in a career in agriculture are critical to economic growth in our state," said Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Jackie McClaskey. "Agricultural education with a combination of classroom instruction, supervised agricultural experience, experiential learning, leadership and skill development through FFA is key to development of the skills which are desired and essential for the future of the agriculture industry, our state's largest employer."

For more information about the Kansas FFA Association, go to www.ksffa.org. For more information about the National FFA Organization and the 2016 National FFA Convention, go to

www.ffa.org.