



WAAE 2007-2008 Winter Newsletter

Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators

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Volume 57

Number 2

President's Report—by Ralph Johnson

We are at the end of an era for WAVAI/WAAE! As I write this President's message for the winter newsletter on New Year's Eve Day—it is the last official day of Dick Aide's tenure as Executive Director of our professional organization!! Sixteen years Dick has served in this capacity and during this time I think that it is very easy to say that he has made OUR organization better. We are a financially sound organization that has met the needs of it's members and given all of us the opportunity to grow professionally. Before Dick's work as Executive Director, he had a hand in shaping WAVAI/WAAE and NVATA/NAAE. Dick served as President of WAVAI in 1982 and he served NVATA as Region III Vice –President in the mid-80's. During his years of teaching and as Executive Director, Dick has received numerous Awards from WAVAI/WAAE and NVATA/NAAE.

During our recent trip to the NAAE Convention in Las Vegas, our Wisconsin delegation had a chance to hear Dick reminisce a bit about his years not only as Executive Director but also as a member of this organization. His final comments were something like "Nobody does it better than Wisconsin." Serving on the National Board for NVATA, Dick had the chance to see how other states did things and operated as Agriculture Educators and according to his words, Wisconsin runs a first class professional organization for Agriculture Educators. I believe that a big reason for that is the constant leadership that Wisconsin has enjoyed for the past sixteen years!

This past summer at our Professional Development Conference, I had the opportunity to work quite closely with the exhibitors in helping them find their booth space to collecting door prizes, to making sure that they had tickets for the luncheon and the Pork Chop Social, etc. As I talked with these exhibitors, more than once they told me that no other state treats their exhibitors better than Wisconsin does. They really appreciate the amount of time that they get to spend with you the Ag Teachers from Wisconsin. They get more exhibit time, they have more space to exhibit in, and they are always treated very well while they are there. I have come to realize over the past two years that this has not happened by accident. It has happened because Dick has made this a priority to make them feel welcome and to make them feel like they get their monies worth.

As I talk with other Ag Educators from around the country I am surprised at the states that do not have an Executive Director of their professional organization. In Iowa, the President-Elect is in charge of setting up and organizing Summer Conference as they have no Executive Director to do this job. Someone else on the board does the membership. I can't quite imagine that extra load being

put onto a person that already has too many things to do. The reason that "Nobody does it better than Wisconsin" is that we have had Dick Aide to do a huge amount of this work for the past SIXTEEN years and the consistency has paid dividends in helping WAVAI/WAAE to become better each year.

I mentioned earlier our trip to Vegas. Five of us got the opportunity to spend an additional day with Dick and Linda, because of our departing flight getting cancelled. Now as you stand in line for hours to reschedule a flight and then to get bags checked and seating arrangements made—people tend to get irritated, lose their patience, etc. It gave us a lot of time to get to know each other a little better. We even had a chance to play cards once we got to our hotel room for the night. By the way Linda is a professional "Dirty Clubs" player and won the game that night. Speaking of Linda—she has been a bonus to WAAE for sixteen years as she has assisted Dick in his position anywhere from taking minutes at meetings to organizing registration at Professional Development Conferences.

So on this New Year's Eve—the final day of Dick serving as Executive Director of WAAE, I raise a glass of cheer and say, THANK YOU DICK & LINDA for making the Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators what it is today!! You have done outstanding work!!

My article could not end there as we have much yet to do and many challenges ahead of us. I am pleased to say that as we begin a NEW DAY for WAAE, we will be doing so with Bridgett Neu as our new Executive Director. Bridgett as you know has assisted Dick for the past five years. She came on board as an assistant after Dick suffered his heart attack and has been a huge help ever since. She has the experience, passion, and desire to take over this position, make her own adjustments and continue to help WAAE meet the challenges and goals that our membership sets for the future.

As you begin 2008, look back on what and who has brought us to where we are today and to what and who will help us meet the challenges in the future.

Happy New Year to you ALL!!

Notes:

- Region III in LaCrosse—June 17-19, 2008
- Professional Development Conference—July 7-10
- NAAE Convention in Charlotte, NC—December 4-6

Happy New Year- Bridgett Neu

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday break and had the chance to relax a little. As I begin my term as Executive Director I would like to say thank you to everyone for this opportunity to serve the agricultural educators in

Wisconsin. As we go through this time of transition please let your board representatives or myself know if you have any comments or thoughts that can make our organization better. Thanks to Dick Aide for 16 years of service and please note at the top of the page the new mailing address and contact information for the association office.

At the end of the program, Sally Shomo and Kevin Fochs presented their campaign speeches for their bid to serve as NAAE President Elect.

Are you and your students FFA members? **Linda Burton, Section VI Alt. Vice President**

2008 Professional Development Conference **Changes—Please Note!!!**

- Sectional Meetings will be held on Monday afternoon instead of the Tuesday luncheon
- All registration must be completed on-line in 2008
- Golf & Bowling will take place on Monday this year
- The Firemans' Park Pork Chop Dinner sponsored by the Federation of Cooperatives will be held on Tuesday instead of Monday
- Registrations received after June 1st will be subject to a \$25 late fee
- There will be a New Teacher Pre-Conference on Sunday, July 6th for 1st time Attendees and those with 0-1 year(s) of teaching
- On Wednesday there will be the addition of a 3 hour workshop option for both morning and afternoon sessions
- **Please watch the website for updates as the conference approaches**

NAAE/ACTE Ag Ed Division Awards **Luncheon** **By: Marty Nowak and Peter Brandt**

The **Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators** were recognized with the highest rating for the Professional State Association Citations. This award was sponsored by Hobart Publications. Cheryl Zimmerman received the Outstanding Cooperation Award (sponsored by Forest T. Jones and Company) for Region III due to her 15 years of service with the Wisconsin FFA Center. Other Region III recipients included Duane Fisher of Auburn, IA for Outstanding Service Citations and Dr. Clark Hanson of South Dakota State University for the Lifetime Achievement Award. These awards were sponsored by Animal Agriculture Alliance and Dodge respectively.

Allan Sulsar, president of The Council, offered insight on the 10 X 15 initiative of having 10,000 quality Ag Programs by the year 2015. He explained how there is a \$30-35 million dollar need for funding the 30 major projects that have been developed. He emphasized that the initiatives major goal is to support local programs by making and state associations better. If you are interested in more information, he recommended visiting The Council's website.

Brad Shoesser of South Central Technical College discussed CASE (Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education). This initiative is provided by the National Council of Agricultural Education and is a curriculum that is provided for schools without Ag Ed Programs or schools that are looking to revamp their curriculum with the 175 day curriculum.

I was just reading my latest issue of The Agricultural Education Magazine - you know the one it is the March/April 2007 issue that arrived just before National FFA Convention in October. (I am glad to see I am not the only ag teacher that seems to run a little behind). I found it slightly ironic that this issue's theme was "Why we do what we do" because sometimes I wonder myself. The issue gives some fairly candid descriptions of "life as an ag teacher" and reminds us all what we have in common. It seems we are all part of a private club - only ag teachers allowed. We share so much but I believe our greatest bond is our passion. Our Agricultural Educator's creed states, "I am an agricultural educator by choice not by chance." I often think about these words. I have the privilege of being a part of a chosen profession, a profession that allows me to teach to my passion; if I am not passionate about agricultural education than who is? When we speak of advocacy we often believe it is for someone else to advocate for us. We even believe legislators, the school board, the administration, the President should know agricultural education is important. How are they to know? If those of us who are passionate about agricultural education - if those of us who believe with every fiber of our being that agricultural education is important - if those of us who know what we do makes a difference - don't speak out and explain it them, how are they to know? Advocacy is about passion. Advocacy is about being so passionate about a subject that you make others listen. You make others believe in its importance. And, you make others believe it is worth their time, their money, and their efforts. Agricultural educators are known for their passion. Let us use our passion to advocate.

But, it doesn't stop there. We need to create a new generation of advocates. Are you teaching advocacy to your students? Are you including advocacy in your teaching? Wisdom often comes from youth. Are our agricultural education students ready to use their wisdom to advocate for agriculture and agricultural education for the future? This is your call to action - train your students to be the advocates of the future. FFA - For Future Advocates - get your students involved today

Advocacy-I looked up this word in the thesaurus and found the following words. Support, encouragement, backing, sponsorship, and promotion. Looking at your Agriculture Education/FFA Program, what comes to mind as you think of these words? If we tend to be a little on the negative side, we probably think; I get very little **support**. I rarely hear **encouragement** from my administrator. I got very little **backing** on that discipline issue that occurred the other day. It's getting harder and harder to get **sponsorships** for our program and the money just doesn't go as far anymore. The only **promotion** of this program comes from me! Sound familiar! It certainly does to me. If we don't advocate our own program-who will? Instead of

asking what am I getting out of this, we need to be proactive and positive when it comes to promoting Agriculture Education/FFA in our schools, in our counties, in Wisconsin, and across the entire US of A.

Our FFA Alumni is a tremendous **support** of our programs. They not only buy us needed equipment, supplies, and provide resources, but they are also the ones in the community that are verbally promoting our program to others. The **encouragement** that you give to the parents for allowing their sons and daughters to be a part of our classrooms and participate in FFA activities goes a long way to building a great relationship with them. If they can see the benefits that their children receive from this program, then you have their **backing** for a lifetime. Seeking out **sponsorships** from your community businesses is a necessity! These sponsorships don't always come in the form of money, but also as a resource and a wealth of knowledge in countless areas of agriculture. These people are more than happy to **promote** their own businesses and knowledge in highly technical areas. We have Landmark Agronomy Services in Juda and they play a huge part in helping me teach students about agronomy. We have a nine acre test plot that is within walking distance to the school. Landmark provides all of the inputs for this plot as well as the knowledge to use them. We sell the crop when it is harvested and put the money into our FFA account with very few expenses. It is a win-win situation for us, but Landmark is just as appreciative to us as we are to them. They make us feel like we are doing them a huge favor by working with them in this capacity. And they are right!

We may be providing them with the audience to train their future employees or customers.

With the continuing tight and shrinking school budgets that we have in Wisconsin Education, it is more important than ever to promote our programs and the needs for such. My point is that there are a lot of people who can advocate for our Agriculture Education/FFA Program-but it begins with you the Agriculture Educator. If you can get Alumni, businesses, parents, school boards, administration, and community on board our ship-we will have an awesome vessel to steer us into a bright and tremendous future. **Advocate for your program!** Because if you don't who will?

NAAE State Leaders Luncheon by Ralph Johnson

I had the opportunity to attend the **NAAE State Leaders Luncheon** on Wednesday December 12th at the Top of the Riv in the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas. Dr. Larry Case gave the invocation before the meal, which was sponsored by Applied Technologies and Forrest T. Jones & Company. The National FFA's LPS team was introduced. Next Julie Fritsch, NAAE Communications Coordinator talked about the new program called Communities of Practice. You could call this a combination of the Glen Rose website and our own list serve. It is located on the NAAE website and it is broken down into several categories from Agriscience to Ag Mechanics to

Technology in the Classroom. I would advise you to check it out as there are teachers that share ideas from across the country. You will need to register first of all, which is an easy and painless task. Then you can get into the community that you either want to find an answer or answer someone else's question. It is a new tool that you may find makes your life a little easier.

The number 1 **issue facing Agriculture Education** across the country at this time may be a teacher shortage. All states are either experiencing it presently or are expecting to experience it in the next few years. Because of this shortage some schools are forced to drop their Ag Ed Programs or some states, particularly in the east are hiring Ag specialists without education degrees. We heard quite a lot about the 10 x 15 initiatives (10,000 Quality Programs by 2015) that are in place and being worked on both at the national level as well as here in Wisconsin. Recruitment and Retention of teachers is just one of these initiatives that are being discussed. This will be the emphasis at the National Ag Ed In-service in February that Mary Gagnon, Jeff Hicken, Davis Laatsch, Bridgett Neu, and Cheryl Zimmerman will be attending in Indianapolis. WAAE's New Teacher Committee has and will continue discussions on this at Half-Time. Our WAAE Board and Team Ag-Ed have also spent several hours discussing what we need to do here in Wisconsin to meet 10x15 initiatives. Jeff Hicken is also working on many of these initiatives as he meets with us at Fall In-services and also next summer at our Professional Development Conference. 10 X 15 is affecting all of us and it is something that we will need to work on for the next several years. This will not be a quick process, nor should it be. It will take all of us to help make 10 x 15 successful. Maybe your part will be encouraging some of your students to major in Agriculture Education in College. Or maybe you will evaluate your own Ag Ed Program with the help of the National Quality Program Standards (also located on the NAAE website). Because after all, 10 x 15 does not only address adding additional programs in our state, it also identifies the need to improve the ones that we already have.

Notes from the November 10, 2007 WAAE Board Meeting

- **Financial Report:** - Dick Aide gave a financial report and discussed moving the checking account for the new executive director.
 - **ACTE/NAAE Convention:** 23 WAAE members will be traveling to Las Vegas, NV for the convention Dec 12-15, 2007.
 - **Fall Inservice:** Sections that have held their inservices gave a report.
 - **Photo Directory:** Each sectional Vice-President is to take pictures of members that would be willing to include their photo on our WAAE website directory. The pictures will be sent to Bridgett Neu so she can add them to the website.
3. **WAAE membership Brochure:** Bridgett is working on creating a brochure for WAAE that can be distributed at

events promoting our organization. The brochure will include the WAAE mission, goals, and how we support ag teachers. This will also be a great tool for recruiting new ag teachers to join the organization.

- **UW-Platteville Grad Class:** WAAE Vice-Presidents will now have the opportunity to earn 3 graduate credits through UW-Platteville by fulfilling their duties as a vice-president. Dr. Rick Bockhop created the course based upon a request from the board. The cost of the course is based on UW-Platteville's graduate credit fees.
- **Spring In-service:** Sectional Vice presidents are beginning to plan their spring in-services.
- **Award Applications:** If you are nominated and representing your section you need to have your application to your sectional Vice-President before Half-Time Conference. The applications will be judged at Half-Time.
- **National Ag Ed In-Service:** Bridgett Neu, Jeff Hicken, Cheryl Zimmerman, Dave Laatsch, and Mary Gagnon will be attending the in-service from Jan 31-Feb 3.
- **Registration increase:** Registration for the WAAE PDC will be slightly different this year. If you register by May 15 the cost is \$150 for the Early Bird. If you register between May 16 and June 1 it will be \$175 and after June 1 the registration increases to \$200. Proof of payment will also be required at registration.
- **AgEd Workforce Development Council:** Keith Gundlach reported on the Assembly Bill 83. It is being predicted that the bill will be passed before the end of December. WAAE has donated \$10,000 toward creating a Director position that will be housed at DATCP to coordinate the goals and efforts of Ag Education across the board K-12 to Technical Colleges to the University systems. The director will work closely with Jeff Hicken. This position has developed out of a basic need of the agricultural industry. There are not enough employees to fill the positions needed in the industry. The Agricultural industry is willing to work with this program to promote agricultural careers and job opportunities by educating parents and young people about opportunities in agriculture. Keith has done extensive work in changing the status of this position so that it is a tax-deductible non-profit organization. The director will need to lobby for funding for the position. At this time Dick Meske is the interim director. Once AB83 passes a job description will be developed and permanent director will be hired.
- **Executive Director's Contract:** The new Executive Director's contract was read and approved. A new laptop and printer/copier were purchased. Bridgett Neu will be trained by Dick Aide and take over at our next meeting in January.
- **National Policy Seminar:** Bridgett Neu will be attending the National Policy Seminar in Washington D.C.
- **DPI:** Jeff Hicken reported on topics covered at the Fall In-services, CAERT, Perkins Funding, and the Ag/ Science Equivalency.
- **FFA Center Board:** Cheryl Zimmerman reported about FFA upcoming events and activities.
- **Promotions and Public Relations Committee:** This

committee would like to see some new members to help generate some new ideas. If you are interested contact Linda Burton or Paul Larson.

- **WACTE Report:** Jerry Wendt reported on WACTE and was approved to spend \$400 on a display for WAAE at the WACTE convention.
- **Committee Work:** The board members broke up into groups to discuss the WAAE mission statement, the constitution and bylaws, and the 10X15 initiative. This continues the work the board started this summer.

Using the News Media to Establish Advocacy By David Laatsch, President – Elect

Advocacy is the act of defending oneself or one's position. As we members of WAAE speak of advocacy we refer to the establishment of a wide-variety of supporters of our program that will act on our behalf to maintain, advance and improve Agriculture Education in our schools.

This involves establishing relationships between the agriculture instructor and the program with the school board, legislature, parents and community members.

One of the most effective tools in advocacy is the print media. The editor of the local newspaper might well be your best friend. It's been said, "No one wants to argue with the person who buys ink by the 55 gallon drum!" That being said, we need to promote our program by using this media.

Newspapers are nearly filled with "bad news" articles. The press is often blamed for not being interested in "good news." Yet editors beg for articles about the accomplishments of people in the community and readers clamor for this information. The paper just doesn't have an easy and available source of the "good stuff."

So here is where our efforts for advocacy come in. Our programs are made for "good news" and our students can help.

FFA events, conferences and conventions are the obvious topics of news articles. However, news readers like to hear more about our students and our programs. Articles about student's SAE projects and their activities in the classroom are of equal interest to our target audience. A fieldtrip is also of interest and should be reported.

But don't forget the personal side of your students. A photo and article of the two, three, and four generation FFA members tells how your program has been a valuable part of the community for years. A special interest article on the accomplishments of a graduate of your program raises awareness of what Agricultural Education does.

Yes, I know, writing articles takes time—and I know that few—if any of my students can do it well enough to print in the newspaper. Yet we need to incorporate writing into our instruction, even if the article that is sent to the paper is just a fragment of what the student wrote.

A news article needs to include the "who, what, where, when, why and how" of the topic. What a great way to incorporate writing into our instruction. A teaching technique that I use, involves making a list of the facts of specific subject, say the happenings of a horse show. The facts are scrambled up and the student's responsibility is to organize the details in order of importance of news

worthiness. Then simply write the article by adding appropriate connecting words to make the facts interesting to the reader.

We may be able to recruit the editorial staff to actually write the articles-besides that is their job! They just need the leads! So, establish a relationship with your newspaper.

With digital photograph and electronic submission of articles to the paper, the mechanics of getting the articles to the paper is easy. Keep folders of the articles that you send, so that next year, simple modifications of dates and people could report the activity again. The readers have a very short memory and will never be able to tell that you "recycled" the article. Besides, grandma is excited about seeing her grandchild's photo in the paper. Now she is your new advocate.

Note: Have the parent or guardian sign a waiver to use their child's photos for school publicity purposes. I incorporate it into the application for FFA membership and keep it on file.

NAAE Opening Session—December 12, 2007 **Las Vegas, Nevada—By Glenda Crook**

NAAE Opening Session not only symbolizes the start of a great convention, but a sense of excitement to see old friends from around the country and hopes to generate new ideas for our classrooms. The session begins with a full house even though several travel arrangements were unexpectedly changed due to the Midwest snowstorm. Those of us that made it to Las Vegas from Wisconsin were happy to see each other and in constant communication with the rest of our crew that was stranded in various places.

NAAE president Lee James welcomed everyone to NAAE convention and kicked off the opening session by highlighting upcoming events and activities for the week. Buddy Deimler the ACTE Agricultural Education Division Vice President brought greetings from the ACTE and commended the agriculture teachers for having the largest membership in ACTE.

Cheryl Sally from John Deere recognized the Outstanding Young Members. The Region III award winner is from South Dakota. Lori Williams stresses team work and student involvement. She has also established mini businesses with her students to help them develop the skills and knowledge of business operations. John Deere hosts a dinner for these individuals and sponsors a reception in their honor for all NAAE participants to attend.

Our past NAAE president, Allan Sulser brought greetings from the National Council for Agricultural Education. Allan is the first teacher to ever serve as the Council president. The Council is made up of 19 members. The purpose and function of the Council is to shape the future of agricultural education across the country. Allan shared several current and emerging issues the Council has been working on. They include eight initiatives beginning with the Ag Ed Learning center, which is up and

running. This is where the Life Knowledge program can be found. They are also involved in development of the CASE Model and the National Quality Program Standards. The National Quality Program Standards can be found at www.teamaged.org or on your state website. The Council is also taking a leadership role for the National Ag. Ed. in-service this year, which is focusing on recruitment and retention of teachers. In addition curriculum standards are being cross-walked into the 8 career pathways by teachers. The Council is also involved in the 10X15 Growth Model, which was adopted in 2006. This initiative is the main focus of the Council this year. The Council is involved in the NAAE/ACTE Advocacy Partnership as well. We will get monthly updates on their progress. And finally Sulser discussed the Annual Report, which will collect data on current Ag Ed Programs.

Jay Jackman gave the Executive Director report. He was happy to tell us that our investments did well last year and our net assets are at \$637,538.00. If you are interested in all of the financial documents they are posted on the NAAE website. Jackman also discussed membership for 2007-2008 was stable, which means there was no change in the total number of members. He did report that some states need to improve and increase membership. Legislatively, Jackman stated the activity is on a rocky road. The Perkins Bill was reauthorized but there will be a battle for the appropriations as there is every other year. He emphasized that we as ag teachers need to be diligent in establishing relationships with our elected officials in Washington, D.C. so they continue to support Career and Technical Education and Agricultural Education. Our only hope is if congress overrules George Bush's veto. We need to be more dedicated to communicate with members of congress in the house and the senate. To quote Jackman, "We need to build relationships before there is a crisis". Jackman challenges each and every one of us to build relationships with our congressmen. Jackman suggested inviting your congressman to visit your agriculture program or attend your FFA banquet. He said they would especially show up during an election year. Jackman finished up by talking about the National Policy Seminar and the Legislative Action Center which can be found on the NAAE website. The software allows you to communicate with U.S. Congressmen and State Representatives in a efficient manner. The FFA Alumni helps sponsor this program on the NAAE website. And finally, to quote Jackman, "The biggest, hottest, newest thing is the electronic communication Communities of Practice. This is a professional tool similar to a My Space or Facebook type of system. Teachers from all over the country can post lessons, PowerPoints, questions, ideas, etc. You can register online to use the program to get ideas and share ideas.

NAAE President Lee James adjourned the first session and we were off to our Region III meeting and a great convention!

REGION III BUSINESS MEETING—by Rachel Sauvola

Part of the fun of NAAE Convention is always catching up with everyone in our region and conducting business that benefits our group of teachers.

Our Region III meeting was called to order by Tom Hofman, Region III Vice President from Nebraska at 9:17 a.m. on Wednesday, December 12th. At that point of the convention, only nine members of the Wisconsin delegation were in attendance due to flight delays on account of the weather. Later in the meeting six more members arrived! And later still, even more arrived for a total of almost thirty.

Next came our update from Nina Crutchfield who has recently been hired at National FFA. She is Larry Gossen's counterpart and helps to facilitate the needs of teachers in the southern part of our central region. Nina mentioned some staff changes, but most importantly, she spoke of the focus of our LPSstaff - Recruitment, Development and Retention of teachers! FFA is working proactively to get, educate and keep our teachers. Everything is secure - so don't worry about entering information. There are also more scholarships available for collegiate FFA members.

It was exciting to hear from all of the Region III Award winners, most notably Cheryl Zimmerman, who was our regional winner for Outstanding Cooperation. Tom Hofman introduced our Region III Teachers Turn the Key Award winners. Our Wisconsin winners are Rick Henningfeld and Jim Melby. Congrats to both of them. If you're a teachers with 3-5 years of experience, I strongly recommend this program sponsored by Dodge. Come and check out the NAAE Convention! It's how I got started down this wonderful road of NAAE Conventions.

The podium was turned over to our very own Ralph Johnson to give the Region III attendees the scoop on the Region III Conference that we are hosting in June 2008. Mark your calendars for June 17-19 in LaCrosse for a slice of the NAAE fun as our region comes together for fun, education, professional development and, you got it, MORE FUN! You can also mark your calendars for the 2009 Region III Conference which will be held June 16-18 in Valentine, Nebraska.

Our meeting was then adjourned to be re-opened at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 13. The main focus of that part of the meeting was committee reports. First came Finance. Can you believe they are still debating the diaries? Did you know that NAAE spends \$19,000 each year printing those? The committee recommends an increase in liability insurance and that states donate annually to relief funds that can be used for their members.

Second came Member Services. The focus of this committee is the launching of the NAAE Communities of Practice. They want to know what we could do with the \$19,000 we could save if we didn't print diaries!

The Marketing Report focused on the creation of

an electronic brochure to help provide information to those young people considering Agricultural Education as a career. They are creating a link to the NAAE site from the National FFA website. Cooperative events with collegiate FFA and PAS were also discussed as a form of recruitment for new teachers.

The Policy and Bylaws Committee report was small. They concluded that life membership is fading out because of cost effectiveness.

In the Professional Growth Report there was much discussion about Board Certified Teachers and what we can do to get more NAAE members nationally board certified.

In Public Policy news, advocacy remains an issue and a need. It was recommended that we make this an area in the Communities of Practice. They also had the idea to have all staffers in Washington DC report their ties to Agricultural Education and FFA so that constituents and Agricultural Education members can play those cards when contacting their representatives. Additionally, they recommended each NAAE member donate \$50 to a campaign for someone who will have a positive influential voice for agricultural education.

Strategic Planning folks are still working on the plan and identifying 38 items in the plan to assess them in priority order including an effectiveness rating. Finally, state reports were given highlighting successes, areas of necessary improvements and changes in each state. Each state's professional development conference dates were shared and networking was encouraged.

WOW!! Who thought Vegas was all fun and no work? The Wisconsin contingency of NAAE members worked hard this week - learning, growing, networking and re-energizing to be the best we can be in the classroom.

Author's side note: A bit of fun and, I emphasize, just a bit was had this week as well! Get yourself to Charlotte, NC for next year's NAAE Convention - you can't go wrong!

Reflections of a Young Member—by Joshua Rusk **Section IX Alternate Vice-President**

As a young member of WAAE and NAAE I was unsure of what to expect from NAAE or what was I getting into by attending the NAAE/ACTE Convention? I will admit that the convention being held in Las Vegas was a huge draw for me, but after a whirlwind trip across the US and back before arriving in Las Vegas I soon realized that the fun and excitement of "sin" city was dimmed by the learning, enrichment and motivation created at the convention.

Throughout both the NAAE and ACTE

conventions, attendees were inspired and rejuvenated by such great speakers as Ruby Pane and Erik Weißenmayer. We were offered professional development workshops in which we received relevant information and gained proven methods of use from other ag educators from across the country. That collegial sharing not only occurred during workshops but also throughout luncheons, receptions, and common down time in the evenings and early mornings.

All of these things made NAAE and ACTE convention an unbelievable experience for this young WAAE and NAAE member. I personally gained far more however because of the new understanding of what both of these outstanding organizations do for each of its members. Agricultural Education has a strong and bright future and it was clearly visible amid all of the bright lights and glamour of Las Vegas. I would highly recommend to any member to take the opportunity and attend the NAAE and ACTE Conventions. It is an amazing experience you will never forget!

Reflections of a Young Member—Troy Talford

As a new teacher, I am constantly wondering, “What can I do better or differently to make an impact on my students.” I have learned in my short time as an agricultural educator that I must take time to develop professionally. When asked if I wanted to go and participate in the NAAE National Convention, I was immediately nervous about being away from my classes for four consecutive days. Reflecting back on my first convention experience I am eager for the opportunity to attend next year.

There were a wide variety of activities for attendees to participate in with it all starting with the pre-session continental breakfast. While much of the WI delegation had not arrived due to poor weather this was still a great opportunity to network with other NAAE members. Before we knew it, the gavel tapped and it was time to begin the first general session. During this session we were able to learn about the outstanding Agricultural Education programs and the quality teachers that run them. This session also brought us updates on the national level regarding agricultural education. As a new teacher, this session gave me many great ideas and motivation to accomplish many great things as a teacher.

The other aspect of this conference that allowed me to grow professionally were the Professional Development Workshops. There were several workshops

for attendees to take part in and as a new teacher I found myself struggling to decide which workshop would have the most relevance in my classroom. When reading through workshop descriptions, I found a common theme that I wished to follow. Since I have started to get my classes more rigorous in the area of science, I decided to attend workshops that would show me how to do just that. These workshops provided me with resources, tools, and the know-how to build a more science orientated program.

Being gone for four days from the classroom, after the conclusion of a fruit sale, and before a poinsettia plant sale, I have come to the conclusion that this convention is certainly a must for all teachers. This article is a small overview of the activities I found most valuable as a new teacher. There were also many other opportunities that all allowed me to develop professionally. Whether it was the guest speakers at both NAAE and ACTE conventions, attending regional and committee meetings, or just the simple act of networking with teachers, sponsors, or agriculture education supporters, I will fly back to Wisconsin with a renewed spirit of making an impact on my students.

First General Session—Kim Houser Section VI Alternate Vice President

As I sat down for the first general session of the NAAE Convention, I looked around and noticed a room full of diverse agricultural educators. We were all diverse in regard to what size of school we taught at, classes we offered to our students, and how many years we had under our belt but we had one thing in common: we encourage and foster our students to succeed in and outside of the classroom.

Greetings were given by Lee James, current NAAE president; Harold Eckler, President-Elect of NAAE; and Buddy Deimler, ACTE Ag Ed Division Vice President. Special guests included members of the National FFA Foundation and Dr. Larry Case, National FFA Advisor.

It was great to listen to the Outstanding Agricultural Education programs from across the nation. From North Dakota, West Virginia and Oklahoma to Florida, Michigan, and Washington - one similarity was found - all of these programs and teachers do three things: provide hands-on learning in the classroom, empower young members to be leaders in the community and teach our students to respect themselves and everyone around them.

An update was given from Allan Sulser who serves

as President on the National Council for Agricultural Education. Accomplishments include: the Ag Ed learning center is up and running (check it out at www.agedlearning.com), working on National Quality Program Standards, recruiting/retaining new and seasoned educators, and the ACTE Advocacy Partnership.

As for the next portion - and I know you have all heard this before - Jay challenged ag educators across the nation to make additional efforts to meet your members of congress and representatives by writing, calling or inviting them to your banquets, Food for America programs and state conventions as we will need their support for the upcoming Carl Perkins appropriation battles.

For information on what you can do at the local level (or examples) log onto www.naae.org and take a look at the legislative action center link Also, if you want a great networking tool, check out the Communities of Practice link on naae.org. This is a great professional networking tool for you to use, much like myspace or facebook, which will connect agricultural educators from coast to coast with just a click of the mouse.

As the session adjourned, I felt like most of our students feel the first time they attend the National FFA Convention, eager to bring ideas back to my classroom, excited to network with other agricultural teachers and sponsors and hopeful that I will win a jackpot!!

NAAE Convention—Dustin Williams

Wow! What an experience! I'm already excited about attending next year's NAAE convention. I hope that all new Ag teachers take the time to attend at least one NAAE convention during the first few years of teaching. While attending this year's convention I realized how important it is to step back out of our day to day Ag teacher world and take a look at what is going on across the nation. Attending a convention like this not only allows you to gain knowledge and skills but also to share experiences, friendships, and laughter with fellow Ag teachers from all over America. When I heard the NAAE convention was going to be in fabulous Las Vegas, I thought, "What an opportunity to see and experience the city of lights!" After attending the conference I realized the benefits of being an NAAE member and being part of a great organization. I definitely plan on attending future NAAE conventions. Please take the opportunity to strengthen your ties with

other Ag teachers across the nation and attend next year's convention in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Membership Services Committee Meeting— Jay Kennedy, Section 5 Vice President

For those new to the process, WAAE provides a small stipend to board members to help pay for the expenses of attending the NAAE convention, this year held in Las Vegas, Nevada. To receive your check, our executive director, Dick Aide, demands that the article be written before one can receive their check. Dick, just to let you know, it is 7:30 pm New Year's Eve and I have such a great social life that I am at school writing your article. Just thought you might want to know.....

The hot topic this year was what to do with \$18,000. The board has decided to discontinue the pocket diaries that it provided to each state at a cost of \$2.00 per member, for a savings of \$18,000. The board felt that this service was not being utilized by a majority of its members and that it has and could easily be replaced by the electronic gadgets that are available to current members, such as cell phones, electronic planners, etc. If states wish to continue with a diary, perhaps a sponsor could be found for each individual state or the American Farm Bureau might be willing to provide a diary as it does in the state of Missouri.

So what to do with the \$18,000? Seven ideas were discussed that were finally ranked as they are listed here from high priority to the lowest:

- A. Provide a membership card with an ID number. This card could be presented to numerous businesses for a purchase discount or be necessary to gain access to many of the NAAE services listed on the website.
- B. Double the insurance coverage of each NAAE member. Many members were in favor of this idea.
- C. Provide travel assistance for NAAE award winners. I was very outspoken about this option. We don't have to look any further than the state of Wisconsin to see many inequalities in the NAAE award system. Some state winners were fortunate to have their registration and travel paid for and receive a dollar a year lease on a new Toyota truck while others received only compensation for their registration.
- D. Provide dues assistance for new NAAE members. I personally would have ranked this one lower in the list of priorities.
- E. Provide financial aid for states that are wishing to

implement or improve their teacher mentoring efforts. F. Initiate a recruitment program aimed at high school juniors. The committee became aware of a DVD, "Broad Fields, Bright Futures," that may be able to be used to this end. Nina Crutchfield presented the DVD and informed the committee that two copies of the video will be handed out to each state. It would cost each state approximately 23 cents per disk to copy the DVD and distribute it to each instructor in the state. G. Investing a portion of the monies. This idea did not generate much discussion.

We also heard from Julie Fritsch, NAAE, on the Communities of Practice initiative. This is similar to the Wisconsin Agriculture Education Resource Center that I have promoted for the past several years. NAAE members are able to go to www.naae.org and log onto the Communities of Practice website. From there they are able to visit many agriculture disciplines for discussions, power points, lesson plans, etc/

Finally we discussed the financial status of the NAAE Relief Fund. A NAAE member that has been identified as someone in "need" is able to receive up to \$500.00 in assistance from the NAAE. As you can imagine, this was started in response to Hurricane Katrina and has paid out over \$8,000.00 in financial aid. At this moment there is approximately \$7,500 in the fund. It was left to the individual states as to how they wish to contribute to the fund. Currently Wisconsin has a box that can be checked on the Professional Development Conference registration form that allows you to contribute \$2.00 to the fund. If the NAAE Relief Fund ever dips below \$2,000.00, each state will be notified.