Celebrating 90 Years of Wisconsin FFA

In 1929, the Wisconsin Association of FFA began with what’s estimated to be around 400 members. The first convention was held at the state's College of Agriculture, in conjunction with the fall judging contest. Eight Wisconsin State Farmer degrees were awarded that year.

"I have met a number of these first State Farmers, including Howard Gutgesell, who said that he had 'no clue FFA would become such a significant organization,'" says David Laatsch, retired Beaver Dam ag instructor and editor of "A History of Vocational Agriculture in Wisconsin."

In 1976, membership in the Wisconsin Association of FFA surpassed 21,000 for the first time. Females were increasing that number fast, and many other changes occurred in the decades which have followed.

What has not changed in that time, however, has been the organization’s commitment to the future of the agricultural industry. FFA advisors, members and Alumni know their work is as vital today as in 1929.

This June, thousands will gather in Madison to celebrate the organization’s 90th Anniversary.

"The state FFA officer team is excited to host members, advisors, and supporters for the 90th Wisconsin FFA Convention," says 2018-19 Wisconsin FFA President, Amelia Hayden.

"We’ll be celebrating 90 years of Wisconsin FFA, 50 years of women in FFA, member accomplishments that are shaping the future of agriculture, and the legacy that our FFA community is creating. Please join us June 10-13, 2019, in Madison to reflect on our traditions, get excited for our future, and continue building our Wisconsin FFA legacy."

"Tell me and I will forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I will learn." While the debate continues of whether Benjamin Franklin actually spoke these words, there is no debate that he was a great agricultural advocate. It’s very exciting that for 90 years Wisconsin FFA has been living this statement, and for 50 years, women have been integral in the FFA mission. Our youth are learning by continually being involved in real-world agriculture. Their FFA advisors make sure each student receives hands-on experiences within the wide realm of agricultural industries, from gardens to animals and working in businesses to serving others.

We can tell our future generation there are jobs in agriculture, we can teach them about leadership, but most importantly, Wisconsin FFA gives its members an opportunity to learn by doing. We need to make sure they have a Future to do that.

If you want to further support FFA and our ag teachers who are leading this charge, feel free to reach out to any board member or our executive director at any time.

Then, be sure to join us at the 90th Wisconsin FFA Convention in June to celebrate the great work you have made possible. It’s free, open to the public and an opportunity to see your gift in action. Thank you for ensuring the future of Wisconsin FFA for nearly 100 years!
Introducing the 2019-20 Wisconsin FFA Alumni State Council

Front Row, L to R: Cheryl Steinbach – Executive Director, Mark Ladsten – Past President, Cari Sabel – President, Rudy Kaderly – President Elect and Nate Zimdars – Vice President

Middle Row, L to R: Jerry Larsen, Grant Staszak, Cindi Freidhof, Sara Bertram, Amy Voigt, Dave Clausen, Brenda Franklin, Terri Wilfert and Jack Ellickson

Back Row, L to R: Nick Lowe, Bobbie Jo Montgomery, Jacob Stukenberg, Caleb Green, Nick Huffman, Gene Hetebrueg, Matt Damm, Amy Penterman and Bobbi Jo Kunz

Not pictured: Derek Trescher and Chris Blank

Above left: Plymouth FFA volunteers at the Ronald McDonald House.  
At left: Janesville-Craig FFA members celebrate FFA week with floral arranging lessons.  
At right: Current state officers Collin Weltzien and Amelia Hayden visit Washington D.C. on National Ag Day on behalf of the Wisconsin Association of FFA.

Glenda Crook, ag instructor and Columbus FFA advisor has been instrumental in spreading the “SAE for All” message, a nationwide initiative to give all students enrolled in ag ed courses access to the SAE program through a Foundational SAE with which to research and intently focus on potential careers.

“Helping students develop skills and knowledge to achieve their goals is the first step to success,” Glenda says. “Students want to feel good about themselves, and the SAE for All can help them achieve a sense of accomplishment, leading to many more opportunities for them through Wisconsin FFA.”
In 1965, only 40 females were enrolled in agriculture education programs in Wisconsin. They still were not allowed to participate in FFA activities, but that all changed in 1969, when the first females donned the FFA’s blue and gold corduroy jackets. Wisconsin FFA chapter numbers grew immensely through the 1970’s in large part of female membership. Today, just over half of the state’s members are female.

“The females in the program were well received and encouraged to become full, active members in the FFA,” says Clara Hedrich, owner of LaClare Farms, but also a 39-year veteran ag instructor from Chilton. She was one of the first female instructors in the state, hired in 1978, and serving alongside only eight other female ag teachers. This year, nearly 60% of the state’s 324 ag instructors are female.

“Some people readily accepted the female ag instructor and with others, I had to prove I could do the job, which I think was pretty much the same statewide,” Clara says, about her career start.

“I never really saw it as female vs. male, but as a team,” Clara adds. “Our state’s ag instructors are a unique group who are always fully willing to share and give a hand.”

Women in FFA continued to see success when in 1972, Becky Miller from Bloomer FFA was the first female State Officer serving as secretary. Amber Vickers Keller followed in those footsteps of “firsts” in 1989 when she became the first female state president.

In 1982 Cara Doyle became the first female National FFA Officer to hail from Wisconsin, followed by Jackie Mundt in 2004 and Alicia Hodnik in 2011.

“Serving as National FFA Officer was not just an honor, but an intense growth process that developed my skills and set me on a path to future success,” says Jackie. “Today, I have confidence that my opinion is valuable even when I am the only female or young person at the table.”

Honors & Memorials

- In Honor of Mike Austin: Betty Krcma
- In Memory of Nancy (Carroll) Maurina: William Maurina
- In Memory of Robert Giebel, Sr.: Denise Giebel
- In Memory Victoria Harter: Bonnie Jean Peterson
- In Memory of Michael Lindloff: SVA Certified Public Accountants, S.C.
- In Memory of Tim Meyer: Jerry Steiner
- In Memory of Rilla F. Oppriecht: Jessica Amberg
- In Memory of DuWayne Rosen: Tim Wyss
- In Memory of Dean Ziegler: Dean Ziegler Family

What will be your legacy to Wisconsin FFA?

You can make a lasting gift to Wisconsin FFA in a matter of minutes. To make a gift today, simply return the enclosed envelope.

Or, to learn more about other giving options, contact John Hromyak, Executive Director, at jhromyak@wisconsinffafoundation.org or via phone at 608-831-5058 x3.
The 90th Wisconsin FFA Convention

Join us!
June 10-13, 2019
Alliant Energy Center, Madison

Wisconsin FFA Convention Highlights

**Tuesday:** Opening Ceremonies & Proficiency Awards  
**Tuesday Evening:** LDE Awards & Sponsor Recognition  
**Wednesday:** CDE Awards, State Degrees & Convention Expo  
**Wednesday Evening:** Star Awards & Honored Adults  
**Thursday:** Installation of New Officer Team

Visit wisconsinffafoundation.org/events for details. It’s free, open to the public and we would love to see you there!

Thank you, Industry Partners, for 90 years of WI FFA!

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- Wisconsin Public Service Foundation

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