



Indiana State Department of Agriculture
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FFA Officers for 2013=2014, begin term at close of Indiana FFA Convention

By Robert Ziegler, ISDA Communications

Especially when it comes to the people involved, the future of farming looks bright indeed.

That would be the takeaway for someone attending the final day of the 84th Indiana FFA Convention, which took place June 17-20 on the campus of Purdue University.

The passion for the agricultural industry shown by the thousands of teenagers on hand, the attention to detail and considerate care displayed by the adult leadership on hand, and the lights out talent on exhibit from the outgoing and incoming slate of state officers, combined to give a very reassuring feeling about the state of rising leadership for the Ag sector in Indiana.

The passing of the baton (or more accurately, the gavel) from the 2012-2013 officers to a newly-elected slate had its share of emotion, as the seven departing young leaders all reflected on the 12-month extravaganza of experiences to which they have been happily subjected. Outgoing president Cameron Mann (Cloverdale FFA) officially yielded the reins to Franklin FFA's Allie Abney at the end of the final session, Mann's voice breaking as she outlined the responsibilities that go with the position.

For Mann, there is no question as to Abney's potential in the new role, as she told us the following day.

"She's going to do a great job. Actually it's kind of scary to have her following me because she'll probably pass me up," Mann laughed. "She and the rest of the officers as well are a great group with a combination of strengths. Our team is excited to see just how well they do. I'm sure they will have a great year."

Abney, who shows Belted Galloway cattle from her family's farm in Johnson County, said meeting the opportunities for the year ahead will start with the seven new officers galvanizing into an effective team.

"We're getting to really know one another in our team," she said. "Together we have different strengths, but along with the leadership training and instruction, we're going to grow as a team by getting to know each other, so we can come together and make a powerhouse team. "

Abney added that one area of emphasis could be service projects, an idea conceived over a very specific snack.

"We all went out to eat and had some insomnia cookies," she shared. "We are hoping to get involved in some of the small community service activities that some (FFA) chapters do. "We are already involved in



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some of these, but I think we would like to help out with more. It's a way to give back something bigger and better to people."

FFA officers put off school or career plans for a year, receiving a scholarship and an assignment to serve the organization statewide, while living at the FFA Leadership Center in Trafalgar.

The other members of the 2013-2014 officer team are: Kayla Hoenert (North Posey), Secretary; Cameron Frazier (Riverton Parke), Treasurer; Rebekah Frey (Prairie Heights), Northern Region Vice President; Ethan McNeely (Scottsburg) Southern Region Vice President; Shelby Sigman (Benton Central), Reporter; Sarah Dirksen (Jay County), Sentinel.

As for the final day of the convention itself at Purdue's Elliott Hall, there were many good things to see, including:

- Mann giving a powerhouse, rock-star type performance with a speech entitled "The Jacket." She encouraged FFA members to look within as they move ahead, taking principles learned from their involvement in the organization but remembering that it is they, themselves, who must execute the various responsibilities before them. She was mobbed by her fellow officers on stage following the presentation
- FFA executive leadership making sure all the trains ran on time. Director Steve Hickey was the steady, Rock of Gibraltar type presence, his 30+ years of experience with the program exuding in the face of any potential hiccup or flare-up in the day's proceedings. Program Manager Coty Back, himself a former National FFA Officer, showed manic energy and a willingness to handle every sort of detail imaginable.
- FFA faculty and advisors tirelessly shepherding their charges through the various activities around campus. The young men and women get the lion's share of the spotlight, but the concept of servant leadership is embodied with these teachers and volunteers.

Mann summarized well in saying: "The future of agriculture is certainly bright. It's hard to deny that when you see us with more than 10,000 members. Our membership will keep growing and the number of active members will also keep growing. Whether they go back into farming or agribusiness or something else, I think we're ready to go out and share our story. There's an immense need for young people to get involved with agriculture and I think we're ready to meet that need."

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The 2013-2014 Indiana FFA Officers, immediately following their swearing-in.