

Ag Educators: Building Communities

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The FFA motto, “Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve (FFA Mission & Motto)” is what we as FFA members live by, but we can’t follow through with that on our own. Influential people are what guide and mold us along our journey. These important individuals can be anyone from parents, mentors, and in my case the most influential are teachers. My Ag Advisors Mrs. Heather Johnson and Mr. Lane Howard are the people who drive me to pursue my dreams of becoming an Agriculture Educator. These two teachers don’t just stop at making sure that the other members and I are successful but go further branching out to our small-town community helping to ensure its success, by using the assets available to them to make sure that local farmers operations’ are successful and making sure that we are there to help those in need in any way we can. It’s the hope of these teachers that through advocacy, hard work, and desire to succeed they can better our communities and bring them together.

Seeing that there is an apparent disconnect when it comes to people being informed about the industry of agriculture, advocating for it is a necessity. The burning passion these select teachers have for agriculture seeps out of them in every aspect of their lives, which means advocating comes naturally. In our community it’s the priority of my advisors to make sure that our chapter reaches out to our community’s youth to ensure they are properly educated about the importance of agriculture. Achieved by hosting a petting zoo each year where students are given the opportunity to learn about common farm animals and the care associated with them. Their passion burns. Taking the lead to ensure that we are the first organization at the school to host an assembly to peak student’s interest about agriculture, and what we are so proud to be a part of is a no brainer for them. Their passion burns. Working countless hours during expo time to make sure that both our members are prepared, and our community is aware of the work and dedication put in to each animal that walks across that arena is a priority for them. Their passion

burns. Making sure that each week the local radio station has a meaningful program to broadcast to the community about events and information in the Ag world or events coming soon in our chapter is a key item. Their passion burns. We must remember, however, that although advocating may come easy to an Ag Educator that does not mean all aspects of their job are easy, in fact it is quite the opposite.

Steve Pavline once said, “When you live for a strong purpose, then hard work isn’t an option. It’s a necessity (Pavline)” Early mornings and late nights are normal times for Ag Instructors across America to put in the work to make sure that the students they are teaching have all the opportunities possible to grow. One of the most vital assets a community has is the small, local businesses that support their economies. The dedication and hard work that for entrepreneurs come naturally are the same qualities that our advisors demonstrate on a daily. Interactions between local business owners and advisors make the vital connections that create a successful networking system, growing the industry. When community members get insight into what we the advocates for agriculture are all about, we hope that they gain a new respect for the people who work countless hours to make sure that they will be clothed, fed, and have fuel in their cars every single day. A local advisor from Dora, Mrs. Paula Bodenhamer makes sure that she betters her community by exhibiting those qualities that are essential to service – like hard work and dedication to her program and school (Sanders). A Q&A found on the National Teach Ag Campaigns website hosted the following question Why is agricultural education important? The following response was given “Agricultural education prepares students to be problem solvers, leaders, entrepreneurs and agriculturalists through the use of its three-circle model. Classroom and laboratory instruction, leadership development, and experiential learning all combine to offer students a well-rounded education that will prepare them for college and the

workforce, as well as teach them how to be educated consumers (www.naae.org/teachag/faq.cfm).” Using that three-circle model they make sure that their classrooms work as hard as possible to insure success.

The willingness to keep pushing forward is a characteristic that is demonstrated by the wonderful people that we FFA members call our Ag Advisors. Their path is not always clear, and the pass is not always easy, but giving up is not even a thought that will cross their minds, because they know the outcome of that. Giving up discourages students, closes programs, and makes communities lack the future leaders that are being molded into greatness. The leaders this world desperately needs will come out of an Ag program with an instructor that has a passion like no other. The extreme passion that my Ag Advisors show is contagious and makes us members as proud as them. Their willingness to work surpasses their school life and continues to the many things that they are involved in outside of these classrooms. Coming home to their family’s late because they have been attending an extension council meeting a sacrifice that is normal for them. All because they care that our town knows about the deep agricultural roots that was the foundation for it all. Ms. Bodenhamer was asked how she bettered her local community at Dora she responded with, “I build my community by helping to instill good values in my students, to mentor them as they, through FFA, develop their premier leadership, grow personally, and work toward career success because they have gotten a chance to see all the opportunities that our industry and our organization have to offer (Sanders).” Just as the right hand depends on the left our community depends on agriculture and the support they show back is incredible.

Community engagement amongst people is what in the end makes a town a better place to live. I’ve seen countless times when I look back at the involvement that my advisors have in

our area and think to myself how amazing it is that two people could be so selfless. The best gift that I have ever received from these instructors is the hands on instructive approach that they use which makes the problem-solving side of myself come out. No longer does someone have to point out a problem we are facing to me because by the time it takes them to tell me what it is that's wrong a solution is being brainstormed in my mind. Those amazing life skills that I after four years in my ag program possess are skills that I cherish every single day, because those skills are the ones that set me aside from the everyday person. Those skills that my Ag Advisors blessed me with are the ones that will fabricate me into the leader that this world will be forced to have.

7.5 Billion People (Current World Population) in the world and 1% of those are the people who bust their backs to support the largest industry we have agriculture (Agriculture.). The world's population is on a steep uphill slope that won't slow down that means that it's going to be up to these small rural communities to support their local farmers and ranchers to ensure they succeed because in the end they are the backbone of this world. The thank yous unfortunately will never come enough but in every single town, city, or rural area there are communities banding together to make sure that our rich agricultural traditions are kept in place to ensure a better tomorrow. The best part of all that is the fact that there is an advisor with a passion for ag seeping out of them ensuring that the leaders these communities need are coming forth from the ag programs nationwide. Long hours put in, hard work and dedication, willingness to work all something you will find in an Ag Teacher one of the most looked up to members in a community. The wildfire of passion is ignited and has lit my flame to be a benefit to my community and one day be the next face of agriculture. I will Teach Ag.

Bibliography

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