



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Sherry Newell

Media Volunteer

snewellopitz@gmail.com

320-428-4628

State FFA Convention Begins in Minneapolis

Session Highlights: Hall of Fame, Charter Chapters, Honorary State Degree Recipients, Natalie Clemenson and Emma Braford Retiring Addresses

MINNEAPOLIS – (April 28, 2025) Minnesota's 96th State FFA Convention began today at 3M Arena at Mariucci in Minneapolis with the theme *Stand as One*. The opening session featured FFA Hall of Fame and Honorary State FFA Degree recognition, and state officer retiring addresses. The session, sponsored by the Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council, was preceded by Career Development Events and a reception for FFA alumni and supporters.

Retiring State FFA Reporter Natalie Clemenson from the Zumbrota-Mazeppa FFA chapter gave the first of six retiring addresses from the 2024-2025 FFA state officer team scheduled during the course of the convention.

"Life is about progress, not perfection. Remember to be good to yourself, believe in (yourself) the way others do, and most importantly give yourself GRACE," Clemenson said.

Additionally, retiring State FFA Vice President Emma Braford from the Grand Rapids FFA chapter presented her retiring address during tonight's opening session.

"Change isn't the end of your journey—it's just a new path. It's not worse, just different ... and maybe even better," Bradford said.

FFA chapter charters signed

Since the last state convention, four new chapters have been chartered. These chapters are Hope Lutheran FFA in Winona, Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton FFA, Hendricks FFA and Monticello FFA. These additions bring the total number of FFA members statewide to more than 15,000 students enrolled in food, agriculture and natural resource classes.

Hall of Fame inductees honored

Minnesota FFA Alumni and Supporters inducted seven individuals into the Hall of Fame for their support and dedication to state FFA initiatives and agricultural education. This year's Hall of Fame Inductees are:

- Lynn Ketelsen: A farm broadcaster with more than 45 years of experience. Ketelsen has provided a platform to promote agricultural opportunities.
- A.J. Duerr: A legislative advocate for agricultural education, Duerr is a key figure in FFA Day at the Capitol and other legislative initiatives.
- Sarah Kuschel: A regional coordinator for Ag in the Classroom, Kuschel has actively supported the Sebeka FFA Chapter.
- Shawn Linder: An agriculture educator at Grand Rapids High School for 22 years, Linder has led his students to remarkable achievements.
- Dr. Amy Smith: An associate professor at the University of Minnesota, Smith is a leader in teacher recruitment and retention for agricultural education.
- Al Stemper: A dedicated agriculture teacher and FFA advisor at Foley High School for 36 years.
- Dr. Curtis Youngs: Professor at Iowa State University, Youngs has demonstrated the global impact of agricultural education.

Honorary State Degrees

The Minnesota FFA Association relies on the support of exceptional teachers, individuals and companies to provide life-changing experiences for its members. Individuals who have provided outstanding service on a state level to agriculture, agricultural education or FFA are eligible for the Honorary FFA Degree. Additionally, teachers who have created exceptional agricultural education programs that motivate and inspire their students to achieve success are eligible.

Honorary FFA Degrees for 2025 were presented to:

- Stacy Leiding, farmer and supporter, Fountain
- Richard Reiman, farmer and supporter, Princeton
- Cindy Walters, career director, Shakopee
- Sara Berning, teacher, St. Michael
- Bob Sabo, Coborn's, Cold Spring
- Greg Dvergsten, farm business management, Thief River Falls
- Beth Berlin, farm business management, Staples
- Andrew Steiner, advisor, Hancock FFA
- Jennifer McCauley, advisor, Mora FFA
- Scott Marshall, advisor, Hutchinson FFA
- Elizabeth Rupp, advisor, Tracy FFA
- Holly Covington, advisor, New Ulm FFA
- Robert Ickler, advisor, Triton FFA
- Travis and Randi Stoel, state FFA officer parents
- Josh Braford, state FFA officer parent
- Stephanie Braford, state FFA officer parent
- Jessica Grossman, state FFA officer parent



- Luke Grossman, state FFA officer parent
- Jessica Bergerson, state FFA officer parent
- Joe Sundeen, state FFA officer parent
- Brian and Tiffany Clemenson, state FFA officer parents
- Jessica and Ted Hubbes, state FFA officer parents
- Leif Gunderson, state FFA officer parent

Students recognized for LDE achievements

Students from across the state competed last December in various FFA Leadership Development Events, capitalizing on many hours of practice and qualifying at the regional contests. The winners recognized for each event and in many cases moving on to compete at national convention are as follows:

- Creed Speaking, sponsored by the Paul Hansen family: Katelyn Runge, St. James FFA
- Employment Skills, sponsored by National Grid Renewables: Taylor Berkner, Sleepy Eye FFA
- Extemporaneous Speaking, sponsored by Minnesota Farm Bureau: Luke McCrea, Bethlehem Academy FFA
- Prepared Public Speaking, sponsored by Robin E. and Lori Ann Kinney: Lilly Kallevig, Sleepy Eye FFA
- Spanish Creed Speaking, sponsored by the Minnesota FFA Foundation: Adriana Orozco, Highland Park FFA
- Ag Issues, sponsored by Syngenta: Litchfield FFA
- Conduct of Chapter Meetings, sponsored by Dr. Curtis Youngs: Dassel-Cokato FFA
- Parliamentary Procedure, sponsored by Kevin and the late Nancy Dahlman: Dassel-Cokato FFA
- Minnesota Farm Bureau Discussion Meet, sponsored by the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation: Abby Bauer, Medford FFA

The Minnesota FFA Convention is offered in partnership by the Minnesota FFA Association, the Minnesota FFA Foundation and the Minnesota FFA Alumni and Supporters. Throughout the convention, content is available on MnFFA.org, the Minnesota FFA YouTube Channel, and on the organization's Facebook and Instagram pages.

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About Minnesota FFA

FFA is a national organization developing students' potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) education with more than one million members in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and

the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Minnesota FFA Association represents more than 15,000 members and over 200 high school chapters across the state. AFNR education engages students through hands-on learning in the classroom, work-based learning opportunities known as Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects and FFA activities.

About Minnesota FFA Foundation

The Minnesota FFA Foundation hosts events to support more than 15,000 FFA members across Minnesota. The Minnesota FFA Foundation is incredibly honored to support the Minnesota FFA and thanks its donors and sponsors who make this possible. It is the mission of the Minnesota FFA Foundation to secure strategic partnerships and financial resources that promote and enhance premier leadership, personal growth and career success for Minnesota youth in AFNR education. To learn more about supporting Minnesota FFA through the Minnesota FFA Foundation at mnffaoundation.org.

About Minnesota FFA Alumni and Supporters

The Minnesota FFA Alumni and Supporters works to support more than 15,000 FFA members, through Alumni and Supporters Chapters across the state. Adult membership is open to anyone interested in supporting and promoting agriculture, agricultural education and FFA at the local, state and national level. One need not have worn the blue jacket to be a member of the FFA Alumni and Supporters, whose mission is to work to secure the promise of Agriculture Education and FFA by creating an environment where people and communities can develop their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success. Learn more about the Minnesota FFA Alumni and Supporters at MNFFAAlumni.org. Learn more about the experiences of FFA members and supporters by visiting MNFFA.org and FFA.org.