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State FFA Stars Named at Minnesota FFA Convention

Session highlights: Star Awards, Top 10 Chapters, Models of Innovation, State FFA Degrees, and retiring addresses from Keeley Runge and Lauren Hunt.

MINNEAPOLIS — (April 20, 2026) Minnesota FFA’s top four achievers were named tonight at the organization’s state convention. The recognitions, known as the Star awards, are presented annually to the top individuals from four different Supervised Agricultural Experience areas and are sponsored by Compeer Financial. The Star awards program recognizes members for their outstanding achievement and dedication to their SAEs. The 2026 State Stars are:

- Star Farmer: Jada Hansen, Foley, Foley FFA
 - Hansen has built her FFA Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) by raising feeder calves. Her work began on a small scale and expanded as she handled more animals, secured relationships for acquiring calves, continually adjusted nutrition and health protocols, and found additional space for the venture.
- Star in Production: Blake Siewert, Lake City, Lake City FFA
 - Siewert has built his SAE around work at his family’s farm, Hyde Park Holsteins. The dairy has provided him with opportunities to gain experience in genetics, nutrition, veterinary practices, forage chopping, and more.
- Star in Agribusiness: Piper Rigge, Redwood Falls, Redwood Valley FFA
 - Rigge has developed her SAE around her family businesses, Grandview Valley Winery and Rivendell at Grandview. She oversees menu items, prunes and maintains the vineyard, develops specialty products and manages the company’s social media presence.
- Star in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resource Sciences: Andrew Mutchler, Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids FFA
 - Mutchler’s SAE is through Mutchler’s Forestry Service, a family-owned contracting business where he has developed skills in GPS mapping, timber harvesting and mechanical operations. Looking ahead, Mutchler plans to turn his experience into a long-term career alongside his family.

The awards were presented during the second session of the 2026 Minnesota FFA Convention in Minneapolis. The evening also included retiring addresses from Minnesota FFA state officers Keeley Runge and Lauren Hunt, state FFA degree awards, and recognition of outstanding chapters from more than 220 currently established in the state. Prior to the session, members enjoyed the state FFA band and chorus concert.

State FFA Degrees

The Minnesota State FFA Degree was awarded to 377 agriculture, food and natural resources education students from across the state. The degree is given to the top members of a state FFA Association, and only 2% of Minnesota FFA members earn the distinction. It demonstrates that the student has invested an exceptional amount of time in their FFA experience and has gone above and beyond in their local chapter and community. The state degree charms presented to each recipient are sponsored by Riverview LLP.

Top Ten Chapters Announced

Minnesota's top three FFA Chapters were recognized, along with the remaining seven of the top 10 chapters. Over the past year, these chapters have been dedicated to furthering their education, working on various projects and carrying out community service initiatives.

Glencoe Silver Lake, Granada-Huntley-East Chain and Sleepy Eye FFA are the top three chapters for 2026, with the Premier Chapter to be named from among the three during Tuesday's first session.

The remaining chapters in the top 10 are:

- Fourth place: Highland Park
- Fifth place: Tracy
- Sixth place: Chatfield
- Seventh place: Eden Valley-Watkins
- Eighth place: ROCORI
- Ninth place: Atwater-Cosmos-Grove City
- Tenth place: Hendricks

Models of Innovation

The National Chapter Award Program recognizes FFA chapters that actively implement the mission and strategies of the organization. These chapters improve chapter operations that emphasize growing leaders, building communities and strengthening agriculture. Chapters are rewarded for providing educational experiences for the entire membership.

The 2026 overall winner in the Models of Innovation award category is the Tracy FFA with their project "Help Tuck Them In," which topped the Building Communities category.

In the category of Strengthening Agriculture, the winner is Lake City FFA with their project "Firefighters Teach FFA Farm Safety."

In the Growing Leaders category, the winner is Sibley East FFA for their Career and Technical Education Career Fair.

Retiring addresses delivered

Retiring State FFA Sentinel Lauren Hunt from the Willmar FFA Chapter gave her retiring address, challenging members attending the session. “Be the best of you — because the best you is the person you are right now, in this moment, without changing anything about who you are,” said Hunt.

Additionally, retiring State FFA Reporter Keeley Runge from the St. James FFA Chapter used her retiring address to offer thanks. “I want to express my gratitude, but words don’t do justice. You have truly changed my life, and I am proud to know that I will always have a home in the blue corduroy jacket. Thank you,” said Runge.

State Officer Candidates Introduced

The following 15 individuals were announced as 2026-2027 state FFA officer candidates. The new officer team will be announced at the final session of the FFA convention on Tuesday evening.

- Luke McCrea, Bethlehem Academy FFA
- Aidyn Brutger, Eden Valley-Watkins FFA
- Edward Winters, Zumbrota-Mazeppa FFA
- Liv Vander Kooi, Worthington FFA
- Mattea Quigley, Randolph FFA
- Ella Aarsvold, Kasson-Mantorville FFA
- Anna Siewert, Glencoe-Silver Lake FFA
- Lucia Martinez Paredes, Sleepy Eye FFA
- Christian Schafer, Grand Rapids FFA
- Adreanna Maas, Milaca FFA
- Piper Rigge, Redwood Valley FFA
- Kian Mahon, Glencoe-Silver Lake FFA
- Ambra Andrist, Kasson-Mantorville FFA
- Hector Villanueva, Northfield FFA
- Aubree Paplow, Springfield FFA

Band and Chorus Concert

The state FFA band and chorus concert preceded the session. FFA members from across the state performed a wide variety of pieces. The FFA band is sponsored by Charles and Barb Melberg, and the FFA chorus is sponsored by Threads Custom Apparel.

Prior to the session, more than 4,000 FFA members attended a variety of workshops and tours focused on agriculture, food and natural resources, as well as leadership and personal development.

The convention's evening session was sponsored by the College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota.

For more information on the Minnesota FFA State Convention, visit MNFFA.org, or follow Minnesota FFA on its [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) pages.

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Editor's Note: Session photos are available [here](#). Additional photos will be shared as sessions and recognition occur.

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 just over 16,000 members and over 200 high school chapters. 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 16,000 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 16,000 FFA members, through Alumni and Supporters Chapters. 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.