

Bill Stouffer on Importance of FFA, Other Vocational Education

*“Students from the entire state involved in FFA have a common interest and find a place to belong that helps them develop premier leadership, personal growth, and career success.” stated Jaclyn DeWeese, Brunswick, Area 3 State FFA Vice-President*

Many corduroy blue jackets filled the hallways on Tuesday. I met with state FFA officers as they explained to me the importance of this great vocational program. This unified chapter across the nation prepares our students for adulthood.

Agriculture is the leading employer in the United States with 22 million people who work within the industry. There are 2.19 million farms in America. The National FFA Organization, the largest student organization in the world, prepares our young citizens to fill these positions. Thirty-seven out of 45 schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Senate District have FFA Chapters.

These chapters provide many opportunities in leadership, career, and personal growth. Each FFA Member has to keep an SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience) book. FFA members across the nation bring in four billion dollars annually. The SAE project helps them learn how to keep a budget, and gives them work experience.

FFA provides 23 career developmental events. The events include public speaking, livestock judging, environmental and natural resources, meats evaluation, parliamentary procedure, and others. Students can experience FFA during the summer with trips to FFA Leadership Camp in Lake of the Ozarks or a trip to Washington D.C. through the FFA Washington Leadership Conference. There are also many events throughout the year for students to attend including dances, competitions, fundraisers, and ending with a banquet.

FFA and vocational agriculture provide an opportunity for schools to teach students useful skills and provide much needed vocational training to meet state standards. The state provides a good amount of grants and assistance to vo-ag programs, including partnerships in buying much needed shop tools and equipment. I strongly support these programs, because they encourage rural economic growth.

At the end of the students' high school career the student has an opportunity for many scholarships. The national organization has given out \$22 million in scholarships. One school in the district raised \$1200 for a local scholarship. The members also can earn their State and American Degree, which is a collection of activities, participated in high school inside and outside of FFA, and the SAE project. My staff also has experience in FFA; one helped start an FFA chapter in Macon County and one received her American Degree.

There are other vocational programs that are just as important as FFA, to name a few of them: FCCLA, FBLA, DECA and many more. Each of these vocational programs provides experience to students for careers after high school or college.

If you have comments about this issue or any other issue please do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 866-768-3987 or email at [bstouffer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:bstouffer@senate.mo.gov).

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