



# VATAT

## News

A publication of the Texas Agricultural Education Family ☆ 2012 Volume III, Issue VIII

## "From the Duck Blind"

By: *Russell Thomas, Gilmer*

As I was traveling to San Antonio for the livestock show, I started to reflect on a goose hunt that I had this fall. Several of my hunting buddies and I traveled to Knox City to try our luck on some Canadian geese. I was very excited about the hunt.

Arriving at the lodge that afternoon, we met with our guide to discuss the morning hunt. He gave us instructions, such as what time to leave, breakfast details, when to shoot and decoy placement. Four a.m. came really early; breakfast was ready and then to the field. Traveling to a wheat field that only had a little bit of wheat stubble didn't look like much of a goose magnet to me, but I'm not the guide!

Now that we are in the field in the darkness, the guide is showing us how to place the decoys and dig our hole to lay in. "Learning to do, doing to learn" took on a new meaning for me.

After the decoys were in place, I got into my newly formed seat and waited patiently for the sun to rise. While waiting on the first group of geese to come over the field, our guide gave us a few more instructions on when and how to shoot. He said, "Select a bird and empty all three shells on it." I laid

there and thought, he doesn't know who he is talking to. Several of us have been hunting together for years and we are very comfortable with each other and know how to shoot. As the first rays of the sun came over the horizon and the honking of the geese grew louder, my pulse really started to race. The guide did a perfect job and called them right to us within about 15 yards, and then he yelled, "Take 'em!"

While driving, I thought back on the guide's instruction - selecting one bird (your target) and taking aim. As an agricultural science teacher, I ask my students to do the same - select a target and take aim, whether it is a speech contest, being part of a team or running for officer. And as teachers, we have targets each day, month and year, such as lesson plans, entry deadlines, membership fees, training teams, alumni, Young Farmer, booster clubs, paperwork, grades, PO's and extra duties at school. These are just some of our targets, but are we successful even if we don't hit the bull's-eye? I believe so.

For example, if I am training an agricultural issues team, my target is to make it to the state contest. We work hard to be the best team but may not advance to state.



Did I miss the target? Yes, I did miss the bull's-eye, state contest, but I may have hit the 5 ring. The students may have become better communicators, built self-confidence and self-esteem and became better researchers through the process of preparing forums for the issue. Therefore, I believe I was successful and hit the target.

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## TEXAS AG ED FAMILY UPDATES

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# Textbook Funding is available!



For more curriculum aligned to the new TEKS, 4x4 courses, and more about available funding, visit [www.cevmultimedia.com/teks](http://www.cevmultimedia.com/teks)

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## VATAT CAREERS PAGE

The VATAT's Careers page gives you the most recent list of job opportunities available. On the page you can search for the entire list of job openings, or you can narrow your search by looking for job opportunities in your area. If you know of a job opening that needs to be posted online, please e-mail it in a Word document format to [karen@vatat.org](mailto:karen@vatat.org).

Have you seen the latest VATAT news on our website's home page?

We continue to update the site with beneficial information, so check it out:

[www.vatat.org](http://www.vatat.org)

## VATAT Online Membership

Make registering for workshops easier this summer by knowing your e-mail address and password for the VATAT Online System. As VATAT members, you will also renew your membership through VATAT Online, so it is imperative you know the required login information. The Association cannot see your personal password, so in the event you cannot remember your login information, your password will have to be reset.

## If You Are Retiring This Year

Please contact the VATAT office if you are retiring or if you know of someone who is retiring after this year. We strive to keep our records accurate and would also like to honor members who are retiring from teaching agriculture science. Thank you for your help with this matter.

## VATAT Awards Application

The VATAT Awards application and procedures are available at [www.vatat.org](http://www.vatat.org) under Association>VATAT Awards. Submit your application today! The area executive committee member is responsible for turning in the area award winning nomination forms at the VATAT Spring Board meeting. Area winners received after the deadline will not be considered.

## "From the Duck Blind"

*Continued from page 1*



L-R: Robert Reynolds - Alba Golden High School, Russell Thomas - Gilmer High School and Brant Lee - Quitman High School were successful after focusing on their target.

Recently the VATAT, Texas FFA and the FFA Foundation had some targets, and I believe they hit the 10 ring, or bull's-eye, with the Day at the Capitol and *Deep in the Heart* movie promotion. These were a couple of targets that I hope you got the opportunity at which to take aim. If you did, you and your FFA members experienced hitting the target.

As teachers we have another target ahead of us now - one that is very important in this time of education and the legislature. I was reminded of this as I attended a workshop for teachers during the Day at the Capitol. The target is to contact your state representative, senator and state school board member. I never realized how important it is to know the people that represent you in Austin. Now is a great time to build a relationship with them while they are not in session and many of them are running for reelection. Take the time to visit with them or invite them to one of your activities, banquet, FFA meetings, adult meetings or county show. They will be eager to come speak to your group and this could form a lasting, valuable relationship with them.

As the guide yelled "Take 'em," I picked up my shot gun. BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! All three shots fired and nothing fell from the sky. I missed my target this time, due to lack of aim and focus. However, I focused on the next group that came over, and I successfully hit my target.

I hope you will be successful this spring and I would love to hear about your targets.

Please continue to pray for our country, leaders, military and our students.

Be safe as you travel throughout our great state and may God bless you.

## Concerned about the Teacher Retirement System?

*Barney McClure, VATAT Executive Director*

Historically, the Teacher Retirement System of Texas has been one of the most stable and dependable facets of education. Since most teachers will never receive a Social Security check in retirement, the TRS benefits are the key to a dignified and secure financial life after teaching.

During my teaching career, formulas for calculating benefits changed based on the state of the economy and investment earnings. I suggest that you visit [www.trs.state.tx.us](http://www.trs.state.tx.us) for formulas and other current information. Some people stay in education realizing that while their salary is probably below market value, it is offset by quality retirement benefits.

During the 2011 legislative session, TRS was mandated to conduct a study on the sustainability of the pension fund and retiree health benefit program. On the surface, this shouldn't be cause for alarm because we are all interested in those benefits being there when we need them. Upon further review, you will find that a couple of groups are behind these efforts. Bill King founded Texans for Public Pension Reform to support a constitutional amendment to eliminate public pensions such as TRS and Employees Retirement System, which covers state employees. Talmadge Heflin, Director of the Center for Public Policy Foundation, has also made presentations to the legislature supporting similar measures. Their stated philosophy is that the State of Texas should not be in the pension business.

TRS provides a defined benefits plan, which simply means that in retirement you earn a defined amount of money each month based on your previous salary and your years of experience. You contribute a percentage of your salary each month while working and the state provides a percentage. Currently about 60 percent of a retiree's check comes from income through the pension fund balance. Under some proposals, this could change to a defined contribution plan, similar to a 401K. Thus, a retiree's income would be based on the income from their own account. With most cash investments earning less than 1 percent, retirees would be forced to use the corpus of their account to survive. The retiree health benefits are also under similar scrutiny.

I want to emphasize that none of these changes have been made. It is a political decision and TRS and ERS members will oppose these changes. There has been a

*Continued on page 4...*

## Teacher Retirement System Concerns

*Continued from page 3*

group formed called Texans for a Secure Retirement Political Action Committee to defend and secure the continuation of our current system. I would assume that all teacher associations will mount a defense to the changes, and VATAT will be among them. It is up to all educators to raise their voice on this and if they don't, someone else will, and we might not like the result.

Should you be concerned about TRS? The answer is **YES!**



### VATAT TRIVIA

*Post the answer on our Facebook wall!*

What type of plan does TRS currently provide?  
 What will it provide if recent proposals are instituted?

## TRS - Change in Policy

House Bill 2561, passed in the last session, changed the definition of a "School Year" to mean a 12 month period from September 1 to August 31 of the next calendar year. This will affect any employee with a contract that begins before September 1. Currently, when figuring your best three or five year average, you are able to count your contract year; typically July 1 through June 30. Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, annual compensation will be based on a September 1 through August 31 period.

So, if you are planning on your last year counting as one of your best, you may only get to count 10 months of it. This change could have a significant effect on your retirement compensation and would be a topic of conversation to have with your local administration. More information can be found on the February 2012 TRS Update at [www.trs.state.tx.us](http://www.trs.state.tx.us).

## Parent Honors Agricultural Educator

Agricultural education encompasses much more than classroom instruction. It includes supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs), leadership development and hands-on lessons.

Community and parental support of the agricultural teacher and the FFA chapter are essential to the success of the program. And John Wortham, a parent of an agricultural student, understands that philosophy.

"FFA is a major influence on the kids and it is important to support the teachers and the program," Wortham explained. "Working together as a team benefits everyone involved."

While in Austin, Wortham stopped by the VATAT office. He purchased a brick through the VATAT Brick Campaign to honor his daughter's agricultural educator and FFA advisor, Lance Jonas.

Jonas is a teacher at Canyon High School in New Braunfels. He has been working with Kali, a freshman and Wortham's daughter, on her FFA swine projects for the past three years.

"Mr. Jonas is encouraging her to stay active, and I can see huge improvements in her self-confidence," Wortham said. "He has played a very important role in her life thus far."

In addition to assisting Kali with her swine projects, Jonas helps her with budgeting issues, meeting new people and expanding her FFA activities.

"FFA has taught me a lot about responsibility and life," Kali said. "Mr. Jonas is a great teacher and helps each of us. He truly wants us to do well with our projects and FFA activities."

Agricultural educators play a unique role in the growth and development of students. Take the time to thank and honor your agricultural teacher. For more information about the brick campaign, please contact Barney McClure at (512) 472.3128 or [barney@vatat.org](mailto:barney@vatat.org).



Kali Wortham and her agricultural educator, Lance Jonas, are pictured at a livestock show where Kali exhibited her pigs.

## VATAT Pre-Conference Certification and Training Workshops

Online pre-registration is required for the following workshops through VATAT Online. For more information regarding the Pre-Conference Workshops, please visit [www.vatat.org](http://www.vatat.org) under Conference>Pre-Conference Workshops.

### Training Workshop on Sunday, July 29, 2012

- **Clay Target Shooting Program:** 9:00am – 5:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$15

### Training Workshops on Monday, July 30, 2012

- **Clay Target Shooting Program:** 9:00am – 5:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$15
- **Hunter Education Instructor Workshop:** 8:30am – 5:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$27, includes a box lunch
- **Private Pesticide Applicators Certification & Exam:** 8:30am – 2:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$25, includes box lunch
- **Private Pesticide Applicators Re-certification (3 CEU CREDITS):** 8:00am – 11:00am; Workshop Fee: \$25, includes box lunch
- **National Safe Tractor and Machinery Operation Certification Workshop:** 9:00am – 4:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$90, includes study materials and box lunch
- **Texas Boater Education Instructor Certification:** 8:30am - 4:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$15, includes box lunch
- **Floral Student Certification Overview Hands-on Workshop:** 1:15pm - 4:30pm; Workshop fee: \$30
- **Archery in the Schools Program Instructor Training:** 8:00am – 4:30pm; Workshop Fee: \$15, includes box lunch
- **New Teacher Workshop:** 6:00pm - 9:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$0, includes dinner
- **Advanced Animal Science Behind the Selection and Care of Your Student's Livestock SAE:** 9:00am - 4:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$0, includes lunch
- **Agricultural Mechanics Hands-On Workshop:** 9:00am - 4:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$0, includes lunch
- **Horse Judging CDE Workshop:** 9:00am - 4:00pm; Workshop Fee: \$0, includes lunch

## Harnessing the Horsepower of Agricultural Education on Route 66

Follow the VATAT on:  & 

# Agricultural Education and Texas FFA Day at the Capitol

For a day the Texas State Capitol became a classroom as more than 300 Texas FFA members and agricultural educators visited Austin on Feb. 21. The students learned about the state’s legislation process, especially as it relates to agriculture, at the annual Agricultural Education and Texas FFA Day at the Capitol, hosted by the Vocational Agriculture Teachers Association of Texas and Texas FFA.

The event, now in its third year, provides a unique opportunity for high school students to learn from various players in the state’s legislative process - legislators, staffers, agency personnel and lobbyists.

“We want young people to grow up to be engaged citizens who have a voice in the legislation process, because they understand it,” said Texas FFA Executive Director Tom Maynard.

Participants attended educational workshops on citizen and student engagement, as well as legislative and agency advocacy.

Deputy Commissioner for Statewide Policy and Programs at the Texas Education Agency Lizzette Reynolds welcomed the FFA members in the general session. Reynolds commended the students for joining the FFA, because she respects the organization’s morals and beliefs.

Also during the general session, House Agriculture Committee Chairman Rick Hardcastle addressed agricultural issues and important legislative topics. He encouraged those in attendance to contact their representatives and promote their FFA chapter.

“Tell your representative how strong your FFA program is on the local, area and state levels,” Hardcastle explained. “Knowledge is the key to politics, so you have to share that information with them.”

Representative Larry Gonzales spoke to the students about pursuing a career in politics. He discussed the various collegiate and professional activities students could participate in to enter the political field. He encouraged the students to be engaged and informed citizens.

The third annual Day at the Capitol was held in conjunction with National FFA Week and gave students a broader perspective of legislative activities.





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SAE Marketplace is an online resource designed specifically for agricultural science teachers and FFA members to locate livestock sales and breeders, purchase equipment and supplies and find the perfect Supervised Agricultural Experience project.

The SAE Marketplace is a venture of the VATAT and is simple and easy to use. It is divided into three categories, which contain agricultural products and services including: The Show Source, Ag Service and Supply Shop and the Greenhouse.

Advertising on SAE Marketplace is a great way to target Ag Ed Family members! Advertisements run for 12 months and include up to 50 words of text, company logo, website and e-mail links - all for only \$100 per year.

Visit SAE marketplace at [www.saemarketplace.com](http://www.saemarketplace.com) to find your next SAE project or to advertise one!

[www.saemarketplace.com](http://www.saemarketplace.com)



# Texas FFA Update

## 2012 State Fair Validation Dates

- Early Tag Orders - \$8.00 – April 2 – May 4, 2012
- Late Tag Orders - \$11.00 – May 5 – June 8, 2012
- Priority Tag Orders – **FAXED ORDERS ONLY:**  
512-476-2894 - Tags \$11.00 plus \$20.00 priority postage and handling fee June 9 – June 15, 2012
- No orders will be processed or mailed after June 15, 2012.
- Validation Deadline – all swine must be validated on or before June 30, 2012. Validation Chairperson must be present when the animals are validated.
- **Tag Alterations – Any change to size, shape, form or color will VOID the tag. Tag will be replaced at the event and replacement cost will be charged to the individual.**
- Change of ownership deadline – June 30, 2012. All manila forms, hair envelopes, ethics policies, Committee Forms and e-mail excel spreadsheets are due in the FFA office on or before July 6, 2012. (ALL INFORMATION MUST BE IN ALPHA ORDER OR WILL BE RETURNED TO THE COUNTY AT THE COUNTY EXPENSE). All manilas together, all hair envelopes together and all ethic policies (signature page only) together and in ALPHA order.
- Ear Notch Correction and Ear Tag Replacement forms must be faxed (512-476-2894) to the FFA office on or before July 20, 2012. Do not send information after this date, as it will not be accepted.

All information can be found on [www.texasffa.org](http://www.texasffa.org) under Texas FFA>Validation.

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# 2012 FFA Chapter Challenge

FFA chapters in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Georgia, Louisiana, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Texas and Tennessee were invited to participate in the 2012 FFA Chapter Challenge. The top 10 chapters per state received an FFA Certificate of Credit: \$2,500 - first place, \$2,000 - second place, \$1,500 - third place, \$1,250 - fourth through sixth place and \$1,000 for seventh through tenth place.

The following are the Top 10 Texas FFA Chapters:

<b>Industrial HS FFA</b>	<b>\$2,500.00</b>
<b>Needville HS FFA</b>	<b>\$2,000.00</b>
<b>Angleton HS FFA</b>	<b>\$1,500.00</b>
<b>Canyon HS FFA</b>	<b>\$1,250.00</b>
<b>Frenship HS FFA</b>	<b>\$1,250.00</b>
<b>Brazos HS FFA</b>	<b>\$1,250.00</b>
<b>Bellaire HS FFA</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>
<b>Tidehaven HS FFA</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>
<b>Spring Branch FFA</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>
<b>Bellville HS FFA</b>	<b>\$1,000.00</b>



Visit  
[www.ffachapterchallenge.com](http://www.ffachapterchallenge.com)  
 for more results.

# TEXAS FFA SHINES ON THE BIG SCREEN

Julie Vrazel, Communications Coordinator

Everyone has a story, and the special relationship between Richard “Dick” Wallrath and the Texas FFA Association is an original, awe-inspiring story.

Wallrath’s personal demons caused him to hit rock bottom and lose everything - his family, job and hope. But after finding faith, Wallrath picked himself up, built a nationally successful window company with his sons, earned back the love of his children and became the leading all-time individual donor to the Texas FFA Association.

From adversity to success, Wallrath’s life is the subject of *Deep in the Heart*, which premiered Feb. 15 at the Paramount Theater in Austin, Texas.

More than 70 FFA members and advisors lined the red carpet to attend the movie’s premiere.

“One of the greatest pleasures in life is watching someone else succeed, preserve, overcome obstacles or inspire others. That is what the evening [premiere of *Deep in the Heart*] afforded those in attendance,” said Aaron Alejandro, executive director of the Texas FFA Foundation. “We had a chance to see the Wallrath Family – the very characters of the movie – and a chance to see the actors who played their respective roles. It was inspiring to watch the audience respond favorably to Mr. Wallrath’s story.”

Other distinguished figures were in attendance for the premiere, including Texas Commissioner of Agriculture Todd Staples and Gov. Rick Perry, as well as cast members John Gries, Elaine Hendrix, James Haven, Rheagan Wallace and DB Sweeney.

“The future of Texas is all about creating opportunities for the next generation and no one has done more than Dick Wallrath,” Staples said. “There is no measurement for the impact Dick has had on the Texas youth by providing them with a means to achieve their goals.”

And even the actors bragged about the Texas FFA members.

“FFA is teaching the members how to develop great leadership and life skills, and the maturity level of the members is outstanding. They are an inquisitive group who are pleasant and fun to be around,” Hendrix commented.

Wallrath’s tragic, yet magnificent story inspired those in attendance.

“It’s excellent to be a part of something this big and meaningful. He [Dick Wallrath] has given so much back to us,” said Harper Orts, Manor FFA vice president.

Orts was also one of the approximately 200 FFA members who were used in the filming.

*Deep in the Heart* was released across the Lone Star State on Feb. 17 and had a successful opening weekend, ranking as the number one independent film.

A portion of the movie’s ticket sales will go to the



The state officers are pictured with Richard “Dick” Wallrath and Texas Commissioner of Agriculture Todd Staples.

Richard Wallrath Educational Foundation to continue to support the youth and their organizations.

“Mr. Wallrath views his support as an investment in the future of our country,” Alejandro said. “His hope is to challenge current members, former members, parents and teachers to also make an investment in others – to ‘give back.’ I admire his demonstrated faith. He has always told me, ‘I didn’t give the Texas FFA the scholarships. I just wrote the checks – they came from God,’” Alejandro recounts.

Scholarships from the Richard Wallrath Educational Foundation, established in 2006, are awarded to deserving FFA members across the state to help further their education. Today, 35 \$10,000 scholarships are given to Texas FFA members who excel academically, participate in FFA and have the desire to further their education.



**Above:** Members of the San Diego FFA chapter attended the red carpet premiere.



**Right:** FFA members were interviewed by Austin news stations.



# Foundation Update

## DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

Are you proud of the Texas FFA? Do you like to serve? If so, you may have what it takes - service above self.

The Foundation is preparing to select the 2012 class of Texas FFA Foundation Ambassadors. A group of elite student volunteers serve as liaisons with our sponsors, special guests and dignitaries on behalf of the Texas FFA during the largest youth-led convention in Texas. To be chosen as a Foundation Ambassador is an honor. Being part of the program requires an important commitment, but one that will provide a wonderful learning experience

and resume builder. It is high-energy and sometimes stressful, but well worth the networking opportunities. Students can apply through April 15th. Students who served as Ambassadors previously, may be elected to serve as mentors (Senior Ambassador Leaders) for the new class. Ambassadors will enjoy a life-changing experience. Good luck and we'll see you at Convention!

**Apply online at [www.texasffaoundation.org](http://www.texasffaoundation.org).**



## Texas FFA attends annual La Quinta Conference

The well-known corduroy jackets made an appearance at the 2012 La Quinta Conference held Feb. 26-29 in New Orleans, La.

Area II Vice President Heston Heller, Area IX Vice President Kelli Neuman, Texas FFA Leadership Development Coordinator Austin Large and Texas FFA Foundation Executive Director Aaron Alejandro represented the Texas FFA throughout the conference. From exhibiting an informational booth at the tradeshow to attending workshops, the officers and staff spent the days networking and promoting Texas FFA.

"To see the corporate culture operations, from management to maintenance, was an awesome experience for our officers and staff. The conference reflected the core values and relationships La Quinta has created over the years," Alejandro explained. "Attending events such as this hosted by our corporate sponsors gives us the chance to promote our relationship and allow them to network with the FFA members."

While at the conference, the Texas FFA also assisted in setting a world record for the World's Largest Human Mattress Dominoes. The 850 La Quinta general managers, owners, employees, executives and guests fell back on their mattress, toppling into the next to set the record. A Guinness adjudicator verified the attempt and presented

the certificate.

"It was a high energy and exciting activity to participate in," Neuman said.

The mattresses will be donated to homeless shelters in New Orleans.



State Officers Kelli Neuman and Heston Heller are pictured with Wayne Goldberg, President and CEO of La Quinta Inn and Suites.

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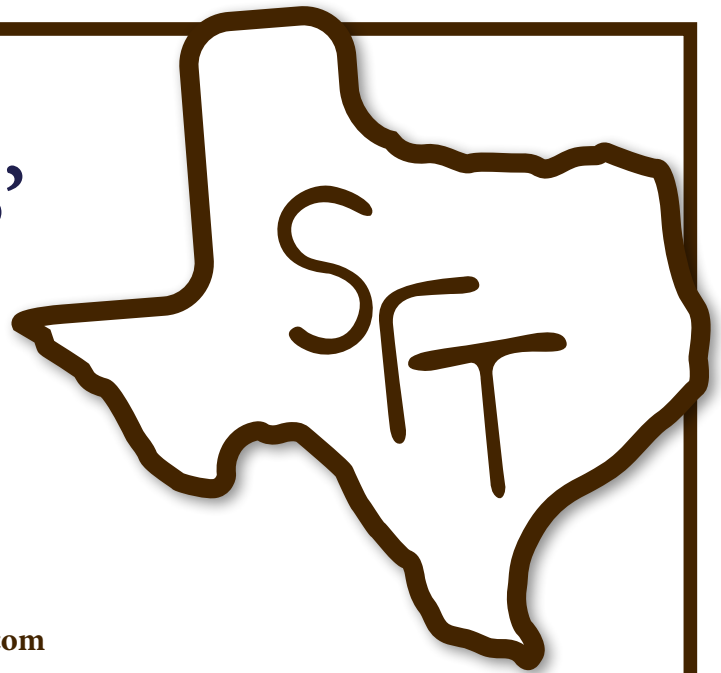
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Texas FFA  
Alumni

Update

## *It's a Changing World for Adult Support Groups Too*

### **GASB AND YOUR SUPPORT ORGANIZATION**

Adult support groups will need to establish their own tax exempt status as independent organizations and may be subject to auditing as a part of the school district's annual audit – all due to tougher audit standards and additional guidelines to determine whether organizations qualify as component organizations.

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board establishes standards for auditing governmental entities—including school districts. GASB handed down guidelines which further define what is a component unit of the school district and consequently must be included as part of the district's annual audit and which must be cut loose and operated as an independent organization with its own tax exempt status.

### **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOUR SUPPORT GROUP?**

Your school district will likely contact you or your support group leadership requesting information concerning revenues, assets and the amount of money spent on behalf of your schools students or employees to determine if the organization's expenditures are "significant and material" to the district. If deemed so, your organization will have additional reporting requirements to comply with the district's audit requirements to avoid audit problems, which could potentially lower the school district's bond rating or TEA financial rating. It also means that it can no longer use the school district's tax exempt status, Employee Identification Number (EIN) or bank accounts.

### **WHAT DO WE DO?**

*Tax Exempt Status:* If your local FFA support group does not have its own 501(c)(3) tax exempt status, your school district will likely require you to establish this with the IRS by filing articles of incorporation and bylaws with the secretary of state's office and applying for tax exempt status and an EIN from the IRS. Unfortunately, this is an expensive, time consuming process and will be a daunting task for many campus support groups. The good news is that as an FFA support group, your organization can use the FFA's tax exempt group number by completing a short one-page document. Please complete the form and fax it to the Texas FFA office at 512-617-8219. This is necessary as the state and national organizations must know who is using this group number.

### *Employee Identification Number (Federal Tax ID):*

Getting a federal number by filing an SS-4 is relatively easy and can be done online, over the phone or the old-fashioned way—on paper. The online version can be accessed via the IRS website: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov). On the sidebar to the left is a search box. Enter "apply online, EIN" and in the search results you will find the link to the online employer ID number. Follow that link and scroll down to the "Apply ONLINE NOW" link. This brings up the application. Note that the application does not accept any punctuation except hyphens and ampersands. You will not need to complete all blanks—just the applicable ones: 1,3, 4a, 4b, 6, 8a-(other) 10, 14 (other) and the name, title and phone and fax numbers. Under 8a, you will need the Group Exemption Number (GEN). Please call or e-mail the Texas FFA office to get that number. You will get your EIN within 15 to 20 seconds after submission. Record this number on paper immediately, before printing or saving the page. If you lose that page, it will be four to five days before the IRS can access it. This process can be accomplished via telephone at 800-829-4933, option 1 or by downloading and mailing form SS-4 available for download at: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-fill/fss4.pdf>.

### **BANKING PROCEDURES**

Most booster clubs have bank accounts already. As a local FFA advisor, you need to keep in mind that as the local advisor, in accordance to national policy, you have an oversight responsibility for any support group that operates under the name and trademarks of the FFA. An advisor should always be present when the support organization meets. In many districts, two-signature checks are required as a matter of policy, and if this is not the case in your district, it is highly recommended. In addition, having and following very clear written policies and procedures concerning disbursements of monies and conflicts of interest are critical to avoiding some of the common pitfalls of volunteer organizations. Your organization should have a clear audit trail to ensure accountability for funds raised and spent in the name of an FFA-affiliated group. The local school district has policies related to organizations associated with school activities and your school district's auditor can be an excellent resource in setting up systems with the proper financial controls to ensure complete accountability.



# Texas Young Farmers Update

## From the President's Pen

*Connie Koopman, Texas Young Farmers President*

Father Almighty we give you praise and thanks for the wonderful blessing of rain that you have given to our Earth. You know we have been suffering with the drought. The productivity of our fields has diminished and cattle have been sold due to the lack of grass. We praise you for coming to our aid in this time of need. In your holy name we pray, Amen.

Some of you might find it a little unusual for me to begin my article this month with a prayer, but I find that we need to praise God in our good times, as well as bad. God has designed a path for each of us, and no two roads are the same. We were each made unique and are beautiful in our own special way. This drought is part of a greater plan. No one knows why we are put through tests such as this, but we are not to question. We must trust and believe in the Lord. If we believe in him, praise him and thank him, he will see us through the most difficult times.

The livestock show scene has been fast and furious. Trucks and trailers have been traveling in all directions, and parents take off from their jobs to follow and support their children in showing their

livestock. As one agricultural teacher said, "I started the week waiting in line, and now I am ending the week waiting in line." These times are very stressful on our agricultural teachers and parents, but in the end we look back and think of all the memories made. There will never be another time like the present to thank those involved in the entire major, area and local shows for all they do. Without the dedication of the people involved in the livestock shows, our young adults would not experience life in this way.

I found some interesting agricultural food facts in an article I recently read. Some people think that they are not involved in agriculture, but if you eat, you're involved. I hope you enjoy these facts.

How, and why, does popcorn pop? Popcorn pops because water is stored in a small circle of soft starch in each kernel. As the kernel is heated, so is the water. The droplet of moisture turns to steam, which builds up pressure until the kernel finally explodes to many times its original volume. Popcorn's nutritional value comes from the fact that, like other cereal grains, its primary function is to provide the body with heat and energy.

Are cherries healthy for you? The same chemicals that give tart cherries their color may relieve pain better than Aspirin and Ibuprofen in humans. Eating about 20 tart cherries a day could reduce inflammatory



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pain and headache pain. Which state grows the most cherry trees? In Michigan, there are almost 4 million cherry trees, which annually produce 150 to 200 pounds of tart cherries.

Which family does lettuce belong to? Lettuce is a member of the sunflower family. Darker green lettuce leaves are more nutritious than lighter green leaves. In the United States, lettuce is the second most popular fresh vegetable. Almost all lettuce is packed right in the field.

Where do carrots get their orange color? The plant pigment that gives carrots and other vegetables their vivid orange color is Beta-Carotene. Fruits and vegetables that are yellow/orange in color contain Beta-Carotene, and carrots are one of the richest in this nutrient. Our bodies convert Beta-Carotene into Vitamin A.

How many eggs are laid annually by chickens? It takes 24 to 26 hours for a hen to produce an egg; there are 30 minutes between each egg-producing cycle. About 240 million laying hens produce about 5.5 billion dozen eggs per year in the United States. Egg yolks are one of the few foods that naturally contain Vitamin D.

Is there only one type of banana? There are over 500 different types of bananas. Although generally regarded as a tree, this large tropical plant is actually an herb. That means it does not have a woody trunk like a tree. The stalk is composed of leaf sheaths that overlap each other and grow from an underground stem called a rhizome. Bananas are about 99.5 percent fat free. They are a great source of potassium, which helps build muscle and keeps your body fluids in balance.

To which family does the apple belong? Apples are a member of the rose family. The apples from one tree can fill 20 boxes every year. Fresh apples float because 25 percent of their volume is air. In the winter, apple trees need to “rest” for about 900-1,000 hours below 45 degrees Fahrenheit in order to flower and fruit properly. Apples are high in fiber, and there are more than 7,000 varieties of apples grown in the world.

In next month’s issue, I will give you an update on the state board meeting along with the winners of the Ag Mechanics Show at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. We are so very grateful for the late Dr. William “Billy” Harrell, who was very instrumental in getting the Texas Young Farmers to serve as a sponsor

for the Ag Mechanics Show.

Thank you for taking time to read all of the articles in the *VATAT News*. All of us involved appreciate your support to each organization. We are not here for the benefit of ourselves, but to help educate everyone involved. Until next time, take care, praise God and be blessed.

Our Association provides education and training to men and women engaged in agricultural production: *AGRI-BUSINESS*.

Our Association introduces our members to agricultural leaders who understands the needs of Texas *AGRI-BUSINESS*.

Discover how our Association can benefit you.

Interested in finding out more information about the Texas Young Farmers?

Visit  
[www.txyoungfarmers.org](http://www.txyoungfarmers.org)  
 for more information.



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## TEXAS AG ED FAMILY EVENTS

### April 2012

**3rd** - Leadership Institute applications due

**3rd** - Stephen F. Austin Invitational CDEs-Nacogdoches

**11th** - Sam Houston State University Invitational CDEs-Huntsville

**14th**- Areas 3&7 CDEs - Texas A&M - College Station

**15th** - State FFA Chorus Applications Due

**15th** - Foundation Ambassador Applications Due - Austin

**15th** - Convention Chronicle Applications Due - Austin

**17th**- Deadline for Steer Tag Orders -TexasA&M, College Station

**18th** - State Woodlands (Forestry) CDEs - Nacogdoches

**19th** - State CDEs - Tarleton, Stephenville

**21st**- State CDEs - Texas Tech, Lubbock

**24th-27th** - TAKS Testing- Grades 10 & 11

### May 2012

**4th** - State CDEs - Sam Houston State University, Huntsville

**5th** - State CDEs - Texas A&M University, College Station

### June 2012

**1st** - Public Speaking Entry Deadline

**18th** - AgriSci Fair Entry Deadline

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