

FFA

Finding purpose begins with two questions

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Finding purpose is the anchor that provides direction and meaning in life, as well as a healthy perspective to get through rough waters and appreciate still ones.

But purpose can be elusive, especially for today's high school students, who face a myriad of expectations from family, teachers and society, said Steven Brockshus, a 2013-2014 National FFA officer, during a lively workshop at the Idaho FFA State Leadership conference on April 7.

To help in the endeavor, Brockshus asked a packed room of blue jackets to consider and discuss two questions: "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?"

He pointed out, however, that insecurity and doubt are often barriers to finding pur-



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Steven Brockshus, a 2013-2014 National FFA officer, leads a workshop on finding purpose during the Idaho FFA State Leadership Conference on April 7 at the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls.

pose and asked the students to first to identify their insecurities and why they exist.

"The interesting thing about insecurities ... everyone else has them, too. They weight us down, hold us back," he said.

But insecurities can be overcome by knowing "who you are" — on a deeper level, not physical appearance and

not "what you do," he said.

Asking that question brings to light strengths and attributes that can lead to purpose, he said.

"When we keep these things in mind, we can overcome insecurities and do some awesome stuff," he said.

His talks and workshops through FFA challenge students to ask who they are and

why they're here and find the answers.

"Once they start asking those questions, they can reconcile who they are and figure out what they want to do in life," he said.

High school isn't always easy. There are so many expectations, and students might be facing troubled relationships or difficulties at home. But if they understand who they are and their purpose in life, they can choose activities, go to college and start a career in alignment with those things, he said.

That doesn't mean they won't face difficulties or struggles, but instead of suffering a lack of direction, they'll experience the growth that comes from struggle, he said.

"It will help them face times of insecurity, doubt and adversity and pull through," he said.

They'll get through knowing there's something to show

for it. And when times are good, they'll recognize things are good because there's meaning to their life, he said.

Brockshus said he doesn't expect a one-hour workshop to bring a revelation or drastic change, but he hopes to plant a seed to get students thinking a little differently. Who you are/your purpose is a topic that might not be posed in routine high school life, he said.

"High school is a hard time for a lot of students. Hopefully these questions will challenge them to be more comfortable with themselves," he said.

In his experience, when students ask themselves these questions, the answers are often "awesome." It helps them dig deeper and discover what they want to do in life, he said.

Brockshus said his own answers to those questions have morphed over time but moving through life with that inner perspective provides direction and meaning.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press
Jeremy Falk, assistant professor of agricultural education and extension at the University of Idaho, talks with an FFA member about the university's program during the Teach Ag workshop at the State FFA Leadership Conference in Twin Falls on April 7.

Agricultural educators embrace future teachers

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

TWIN FALLS, Idaho — In addition to the extreme enthusiasm of the blue jacket force descending on the College of Southern Idaho recently was the palpable camaraderie among those students' agricultural teachers.

That camaraderie is one of the unique perks of being an agricultural educator, teachers told FFA members who are interested in joining their ranks.

Several agricultural educators participated in a University of Idaho workshop geared for potential newcomers to the profession.

Working in agricultural education is exciting and fulfilling because the model is unlike any other. By incorporating FFA and supervised agricultural experiences, it doesn't force education on students but allows them to choose their own adventure, said Jeremy Falk, assistant professor of agricultural education and extension at the University of Idaho.

"This model of education ... is not the filling of a pail, the filling of a brain; it's about setting a fire. You can incorporate all of these (elements) and light the fire in your students," he told the FFA students.

UI agricultural education senior Anna Pratt, who is student teaching at Rigby High School, said she was never so terrified in her life as when she started in January, but it didn't take long to settle in.

"It's a great experience. You learn something new every day (and) you gain a whole new perspective on everything," she said.

It's a "flip-flop" from being a student, and she sometimes wonders if she's doing it right. But there is always an experienced cooperating teacher to mentor student teachers, and "they are with you every step of the way," she said.

The most challenging part of being an agricultural teacher is the huge time commitment and attention to detail, said Megan Booker, also a senior in the UI program and a student teacher at Genesee.

Students might not think about it, but somebody has to make sure shops are maintained, greenhouses are monitored and animals fed, she said.

As for compensation, teaching agriculture might not be as lucrative as some other professionals, but money isn't the only consideration, said Robert Hale, lead agriculture teacher at Rigby High School.

"There are a lot of neat benefits. I wouldn't trade the experiences I've had for a handful of cash," he said.

Nampa agriculture teacher Pat Dixon agreed, saying, "I get to do a lot of cool things I never would have done if I hadn't become an ag teacher."

Idaho is currently in good shape in regard to its supply of ag educators, with 135 positions and 17 student teachers ready for hire, Falk said.

But the profession has been battling a nationwide shortage for some time. Despite reported growth, 27 of 47 states reported a loss of programs or positions between 2011 and 2014.

On average, 67 positions and 45 programs are lost annually, according to the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

Idaho FFA officers retire with gusto

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Outgoing Idaho FFA state officers said their year serving members throughout the state has been wonderful, amazing and awesome.

While they each have distinctive personalities, they said they've learned to speak with one voice to promote FFA and become advocates for agriculture.

It's been a hectic year but one of exceptional growth and life-changing experiences, they said.

No one can ever really be prepared for the experience of being a state officer, State Sentinel Henry Wilson, an agribusiness major at the University of Idaho, said.

"It's indescribable," he said.

The most surprising aspect for him was that "the connections you build with teammates, members and business leaders are deep and long-lasting," he said.

Vice President Dustin Winston, majoring in agribusiness and marketing at the University of Idaho, said the experience was definitely different than he expected and it's different for each of the officers.

Coming into office a year ago, he wanted to impact and serve members. Now on his way out, he said he did his best to work toward that goal but can't determine the immediate effect.

He said he came to realize that being a state officer doesn't necessarily mean he is impacting everyone, but he can use the experience for growth and to have an impact in the future.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

Retiring Idaho state FFA officers pose for a photo after speaking to the Twin Falls Rotary Club on Wednesday. From left are Henry Wilson, sentinel; Reily Geritz, president; Abigail Raasch, secretary; Samantha Daniels, treasurer; Jentrie Statsny, reporter; and Dustin Winston, vice president.

State Reporter Jentrie Statsny said she's learned a thing or two as well, such as being a better listener and how to make people feel comfortable — basic skills that will help her in life.

"I have also been able to step outside my comfort zone and learn to be a more effective leader," said the graphic design major at BYU Idaho.

The year involved a lot of travel, member and chapter meetings and planning and participating in events, said Samantha Daniels, state treasurer, who is majoring in ag education at Utah State University.

"Our schedules are always full, but we love the time we get to spend with Idaho FFA members," she said.

State Secretary Abigail Raasch, majoring in history and French at the University of Idaho, came away with a new appreciation for people and relationships — from

members around the state to all the people who work behind the scenes to support FFA, she said.

For state President Reily Geritz, the experience brought home the reality that agriculture relies on everyone's contribution — such as food producers to feed the hungry, scientists to find resolutions to barriers and politicians to advocate for sustainability, said the University of Idaho ag education major.

"FFA is the perfect model to have for agriculture; it fits everybody. And we're all in this together," she said.

While the retiring state officers have mixed emotions as their year of service comes to an end, they said they are excited for incoming officers to have the same opportunity they have enjoyed.

And while the blue jackets might leave their shoulders, the FFA experience never will, Geritz said.

"It will serve us the rest of our life," she said.



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press

The new Idaho FFA state officers are all smiles at the close of the State Leadership Conference in Twin Falls on April 9. From left are Sentinel Makenna Routt, Castelford; Treasurer Clayton King, New Plymouth; Secretary Jenny Baustista, Homedale; President Gretchen Hansten, Jerome; Vice President Faustin Wood, Madison; and Reporter Taylor Nelson, Meridian.

New Idaho FFA officers: Go after your dream

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
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TWIN FALLS, Idaho — Newly confirmed Idaho FFA state officers were running on empty when the State Leadership Conference wrapped up April 9.

Still in shock and reeling from the rigorous nomination process, reaching their goal of state office was like being in a dream, they said.

"It was the most stressful but most fun I've ever had," said newly selected state Treasurer Clayton King, 18, a senior at New Plymouth.

The journey started long before conference week, the new officers said.

It's like a "super-long hike" to the top of the mountain where you get to see the view after working and pushing so hard, said President Gretchen Hansten, 17, of Jerome, who intends to major in agricultural education at the University of Idaho.

Now at the summit, the 2016-2017 officers want to

give every FFA member the encouragement to make their dreams happen as well.

"My main goal is to make sure our members believe in themselves," Hansten said.

She wants them to let go of any doubts and know they are capable of achieving that "wild dream," she said.

Vice President Faustin Wood, 18, of Madison seconds that, saying he wants to inspire members to follow their dreams no matter how unattainable or crazy they seem.

One of the greatest things he's learned is that no matter how far away a dream seems, it can be accomplished and there's always room for growth, said the high school senior, who plans to study agricultural engineering at BYU-Idaho.

Given her background as the daughter of non-English speaking parents who came to Idaho from Mexico, Secretary Jenny Bautista, 17, of Homedale said she wants to emphasize to members "they can accomplish anything if they work hard, no matter their background."

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