

National FFA officer team includes two reps from the West

Leaders elected at National FFA Convention & Expo

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

Growing up in Bend, Ore., Shea Booster was such a chaty kid he earned himself the nickname "motormouth."

"I was never shy," Booster said. "Every time I met someone new, I just loved to talk to them."

That outgoing personality is part of what led Booster to join FFA as a freshman at Mountain View High School, and later serve as Oregon FFA state president in 2016-17. On Oct. 27, Booster was one of six leaders elected to the national FFA officer team during the organization's annual convention in Indianapolis, as the western region vice president.

Over the next year, Booster, 21, will spend more than 300 days traveling across the country and overseas to Japan, speaking to local FFA chapters, farmers and legislators

and spreading the good word about agriculture education. He couldn't have asked for a more perfect gig.

"I'm super excited," Booster said. "It still hasn't really sunk in yet."

Booster is not a traditional FFA student. He was not raised on a farm or ranch. He didn't spend summers milking cows or driving combine. But that is the beauty of FFA, he said — in 1988, the "Future Farmers of America" officially changed its name to the National FFA Organization, reflecting its goal to be accepting and inclusive to all youth.

Today, the National FFA Organization has nearly 670,000 members in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with local chapters in 24 of the 25 largest U.S. cities.

"The FFA has been a highly diversifying and inclusive organization," Booster said. "It has always made that a priority."

Back in high school, Booster said FFA was the one place he felt he could truly be himself. He took immediately to



National FFA Organization

The 2018-19 national FFA officer team. From left are Luke O'Leary, president, California; Layni LeBlanc, secretary, Louisiana; Shea Booster, Western region vice president, Oregon; Jordan Stowe, Southern region vice president, Alabama; Ridge Hughbanks, Central region vice president, Oklahoma; and Adrian Schunk, Eastern region vice president, Michigan.

the group, making it a personal rule of thumb to try a new career development event every year.

"I was the agriculture rookie," he said. "Any time I had the opportunity to try something new, I would."

Booster graduated from Mountain View in 2016, and is now a sophomore at Oregon State University majoring in

agricultural business management, with a double minor in communications and Spanish. He will return to campus from Indianapolis on Nov. 1 and wrap up his classes by Thanksgiving before heading back for training with the national FFA officer team on Nov. 24.

The 2018-19 officers also include Luke O'Leary, of San Luis Obispo, Calif., who was

elected the highest rank of any FFA officer as national president. O'Leary previously served as California FFA president in 2017-18, and is now studying agriculture leadership and development with a minor in political science at Texas A&M University.

Like Booster, O'Leary, 20, does not come from an agricultural background, though he does remember spending summers on his grandfather's cattle ranch in Grant County, Ore. His first class at San Luis Obispo High School was agricultural sciences, which he said only reinforced his passion for production agriculture.

"It was right from the start of freshman year that I was hooked," O'Leary said.

Being chosen national FFA president was an incredible experience, O'Leary said, made only more surreal by what happened just before the election. O'Leary's father, Thom, the lead pastor at a nondenominational Christian church in San Luis Obispo, was called by President Donald Trump to lead a prayer in the wake of the

Pittsburgh synagogue shooting during the president's speech at the convention.

"I haven't even really heard the full story yet," O'Leary said.

Rounding out the leadership team is Layni LeBlanc, an animal science-science and technology major at Louisiana State University, who was elected national secretary; Adrian Schunk, a communications major at Michigan State University, who was elected eastern region vice president; Ridge Hughbanks, an agribusiness major at Oklahoma State University, who was elected central region vice president; and Jordan Stowe, agriscience education major at Auburn University, who was elected southern region vice president.

Both Booster and O'Leary said they are eager to see how FFA is continuing to develop students across all corners of the country.

"FFA truly focuses on developing students," Booster said. "Being a part of FFA, you get to see youth that is just supremely confident."

Eggert family buys Willamette Valley Cheese Co.

By **MITCH LIES**
For the Capital Press

The Chuck Eggert family, which last year sold Tualatin, Ore.-based Pacific Foods to Campbell Soup Co. for a reported \$700 million, has purchased Willamette Valley Cheese Co. of Salem in a move that will take the cheese company organic and considerably increase its production volume.

Charlie Eggert, farm manager for the Eggert family's four dairies, said the purchase "seemed like a good partner-

ship for us with our dairies and the kinds of things we are trying to do to create jobs in the Willamette Valley."

"We are just interested in keeping good things around and we've always had a lot of respect for Willamette Valley Cheese and the products they create," he said.

Under terms of the sale, Willamette Valley Cheese Co.'s Rod Volbeda will stay on as facilities manager and cheese maker at the Salem location.

"The idea of staying the same and doing what we've al-

ways done and then transitioning to organic just made me get excited again," Volbeda said.

"It was getting hard going by myself," he said when asked why he sold. "The debt load I had was getting up there, and I'm at the age where I need to slow down a little bit."

Volbeda, 53, said the company will continue producing its line of award-winning cheeses, including Creamy Havarti, Eola Jack, Fontina, Gouda and Cheddar, and will continue operating its tasting room just west of Salem at 8105 Wal-

lace Road NW.

He declined to give a dollar amount of the sale, but said he was satisfied with the terms. "They gave me a very good job to run this facility and their plan is to build more small cheese operations, and I'm hoping to be involved in that."

Willamette Valley Cheese Co.'s volume is expected to increase five-fold under the new ownership, he said, from its current 10,000 pounds a week to 50,000 pounds once the transition is complete.

"It is still going to be single-herd milk supply," he said. "It is just the cows will not be on this facility, so we will not be farmstead."

Willamette Valley Cheese Co. sold the last of its cows two months ago and has been purchasing milk from Darigold since. That arrangement will stay in place for the near future, according to Eggert.

"We haven't made the transition yet (to supplying the cheese company's milk)," Eggert said. "We are working on the details and going through the process with Oregon Tilth on what it is going to take to turn organic and use our milk."

"We don't have any plans right now as far as when the changeover will take place, but that will ultimately be our goal," he said. "It is a complicated process and we have never made organic cheese, so we are going to learn as we go."

Wolves blamed for fourth dead calf in a week near Fort Klamath

By **LEE JUILLERAT**
For the Capital Press

The number of calves killed in the Fort Klamath area by the Rogue Wolf Pack now totals four.

Officials from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, who over last weekend confirmed the killings of three yearlings found over a three-day period last week, Tuesday confirmed a fourth dead calf that was found Friday morning was killed by wolves.

The three other dead calves were found three different days last week on Wood River Valley ranch lands owned by Bill Nicholson that are leased to DeTar Livestock of Dixon, Calif. The fourth was discovered Friday on neighboring land owned by Roger Nicholson, Bill Nicholson's cousin.

Tom Collum, wildlife biologist for ODF&W's Klamath Falls office, said personnel are taking turns camping in a field near the Nicholson Ranch where they are using non-lethal methods, including sirens, large bonfires, strobe lights and the firing of cracker shells, to try to deter wolves.

"We're just trying to employ some different hazing devices," Collum said.

One camper reported



Courtesy of Bill Nicholson
Attacked by wolves, this beef cow died in a ditch.

hearing howling and distressed bawling about 1:30 a.m. Friday, but no noise has been reported in recent nights.

Remote cameras are being used to help track possible movement and five traps have been set in hopes of capturing wolves so they can be collared with tracking devices. Efforts at tracking wolf movements have been frustrated because none of the Rogue Pack wolves, including OR-7, have operating collars.

Nicholson said the number of wolves in the valley is uncertain because one camera picked up six, including OR-7, while five were seen by another camera in a nearby field at about the same time. OR-7 has a collar but it no longer works.

In 2016, when four grazing cattle were attacked and eaten alive by wolves, ODF&W and other game biologists also stayed overnight in an effort to deter wolf predation. At the time, one wolf had an operating collar that helped track the pack's movements.

On Saturday, when ODF&W biologists visited the Nicholson ranch, it was determined one calf had been attacked and was bleeding when it was dragged 500 feet to a ditch, where it died.

Until last week it was believed the Rogue Pack was on the west side of the Cascade Range. In September it was determined a large dog guarding cattle near Prospect had been killed by a wolf. Before the recent killing, the last confirmed cattle attacks by the Rogue Pack were in January, when two calves were killed two days apart near Butte Falls.

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