

Q&A: Retiring Idaho FFA officers share their experience

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

After a busy and exciting year of promoting and advancing the FFA mission, Idaho's retiring state officers will now move onto their next adventure in life.

They say they have learned so much and are grateful for the life skills gained and the relationships made that will serve them well beyond their year in office.

FFA President Kayden Driggs, Vice President Katie Hebdon, Secretary Claire Shelton, Treasurer Cassie Moody, Reporter Kennedy Farden and Sentinel Cassie Morey reflected on their year of service in a Q&A with Capital Press.

Their responses have been edited for clarity and length.

What is it like to be a state FFA officer as far as your schedule and responsibilities?

Driggs: The schedule and overview of a state officer is very diverse and unique. We do everything from board meetings, chapter visits, legislative visits, traveling, meeting with other state officers, creating workshops, working with other organizations and more.

Hebdon: As state officers, we spend a lot of time on the road traveling around the state and the country. We get to visit numerous FFA programs and interact with members and business representatives. Being a state officer has taught me how to manage my schedule effectively so that I can do behind-the-scenes work like social media while still getting my schoolwork complete.

Shelton: Serving on the state officer team keeps you busy. Our team has visited chapters all across the state, led Gem State Leadership Conferences for members, toured agricultural business/industries, met with legislators in Boise and Washington, D.C., led district officer trainings, promoted the Idaho FFA Association through social media and more. As we only get one year serving



Idaho FFA

Outgoing Idaho FFA state officers at the Idaho Capitol in January. Left to right are Vice President Katie Hebdon, Treasurer Cassie Moody, Sentinel Cassie Morey, President Kayden Driggs, Reporter Kennedy Farden and Secretary Claire Shelton.

the association as a state officer, we do everything we can to promote FFA and serve our members.

Moody: One of the best parts of being a state officer is that no two days are ever the same. We are blessed with the opportunity to do a variety of activities. Some of our typical responsibilities include corresponding with FFA members and advisors, attending weekly meetings, serving on the Idaho FFA board of directors, creating workshop materials and more.

Farden: We have a very busy schedule almost all the time with many responsibilities, but we have been taught valuable time-management skills and how to balance many responsibilities at once.

Morey: Being a state officer comes with a lot of responsibilities, but the payoff is so worth it. Our schedule is usually pretty full. Although state office keeps us very busy, it is one of the most rewarding responsibilities I have ever had.

How did the pandemic affect your experience?

Driggs: I am extremely thankful and grateful that as we were elected the pandemic started to calm down, allowing us to travel and transition back to a normal way of life together.

Hebdon: The greatest effect the pandemic had on us was teaching us how to be flexible and roll with the different situations thrown at us. We are honestly just so grateful to be out serving Idaho FFA members in

person again.

Shelton: We wore masks at schools that required them and at the national convention. Typically in July the whole team would attend the State Officer Summit in Washington, D.C., however, this year Kayden and I were the only ones that could attend in person. Luckily our whole team was still able to come for legislative visits.

Moody: One of the main ways the pandemic affected our experience is that we were elected virtually, which meant I didn't meet my teammates in person until we met for our first training. Other than that, we have had a fairly typical state officer year. I am beyond excited and feel extremely blessed to have our state convention in person this year.

Farden: Towards the beginning of the year, we were asked to wear masks in select places. But other than that I did not see much effect.

Morey: We got into office at almost the perfect time. All of our events have been in person. We are so excited to be back in person for the first state convention in three years.

What did you learn this year and how has it influenced your life?

Driggs: One year teaches you many lessons that we take back home, learn and grow to help us keep succeeding. The most important lesson I have learned this year is to enjoy what is around us in life right now and go where life takes you. This has influenced my life by putting people and lessons

in my life that have led me to be a better person.

Hebdon: I have learned so many different things this year, but I think a few of the big ones are how to engage a diverse group of people, more knowledge to advocate for agriculture, better teamwork and communication skills. State office has influenced my life because I know I want a career based in servant leadership and agriculture.

Shelton: I learned a lot about communication. As our team often was spread all across the state, communication was a key for a successful year as a team. I had to learn how communication styles work differently for everyone. This year taught me lifelong skills that I will use for the rest of my life in my future career. Serving as a state officer has given me many opportunities and skills that have helped me grow as a leader and as a person.

Moody: I cannot even begin to describe the impact it has had on my life. Some of the most notable things I have learned are good communication skills, public speaking skills, time management and teamwork. I have also been heavily impacted by those I have worked with, such as my teammates, as they have pushed me to be the best version of myself.

Farden: I have learned how to communicate effectively, work with a team and individually and how to manage my time. These are all skills needed in real life and they have helped me dramatically in day-to-day life.

Morey: I have learned so much this year. As an agricultural education major, this year has really influenced my love for teaching students more than I ever thought it could. I learned a ton about time management, how to keep a positive attitude when times get tough and, most importantly, how to be myself all the time.

What were your goals and did you accomplish them?

Driggs: My goal was to serve, inspire and be inspired. All of these have seemed to have been accomplished, which helps me grow as an individual and pushes me to do more after my time in office.

Hebdon: I wanted to meet new people and travel to places in Idaho that I hadn't been. I accomplished both goals while on chapter visits and at national convention. In addition, I wanted to become a better team player and speaker. State office has definitely helped me grow in so many ways as a leader.

Shelton: My goal was to take up all opportunities to promote FFA, encourage others to join and make everyone feel welcomed into this organization. I did chapter visits in five of the 10 districts and encouraged students to join this organization and shared my FFA experiences coming from no agricultural background. Another goal was increasing our engagement on the Idaho FFA TikTok account. I ran the account and through posting engaging videos, we have been able to use this platform to advocate for FFA and agriculture

OFFICER BIOS

State President Kayden Driggs: Teton FFA; second-year student, College of Southern Idaho; hopes to be accepted into veterinary school to become a large and small animal veterinarian

State Vice President Katie Hebdon: Nampa FFA; first-year student, University of Idaho double majoring in agricultural business and animal science; wants to pursue a master's in nutrition to become a dairy cattle nutritionist

State Secretary Claire Shelton: Meridian FFA; first-year student, University of Idaho double majoring in animal science and medical science; wants to become a pediatric otolaryngologist to help children overcome the hearing and speech obstacles she has faced

State Treasurer Cassie Moody: Middleton FFA; first-year student, University of Idaho majoring in agricultural education to teach high school agriculture

State Reporter Kennedy Farden: New Plymouth FFA; first-year student, College of Southern Idaho double majoring in agribusiness and animal science; wants to work in marketing or sales in animal health

State Sentinel Cassie Morey: Deary FFA; first-year student, University of Idaho majoring in agricultural education; wants to teach agricultural education

on behalf of the association.

Moody: A few of my goals were to lead with a servant mindset, better my facilitation skills and to broaden my horizons in the agricultural industry. I was presented with several opportunities that allowed me to put these goals into place, and I am very thankful for each of them.

Farden: My goal was to be confident leading others and learn more about who I am as a leader. Looking back on the growth I have made, I not only accomplished my goals but many checkpoints along the way.

Morey: One of my biggest goals was to simply make an impact on as many students as possible. Although this goal isn't super measurable, I have done my best to accomplish this by making true connections with students, always being kind, setting an example of how important it is to stay true to yourself and being active on social media to reach as many students as possible.

What advice do you have for incoming officers?

Driggs: You only have 1 year, take it all in and enjoy every part of it, the good and the bad.

Hebdon: Soak up everything and don't take your time for granted. You only have a limited amount of time to serve Idaho FFA members, so cherish all of it. Take advantage of every opportunity and late night because those make the best memories.

Shelton: Take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve, so do what you can to make the most of your year.

Moody: Soak in every single moment. Remember that it is an honor to serve in this position and never forget how blessed you are to have this opportunity, especially through times when you feel challenged.

Farden: Take in every moment and keep a good attitude. You only get this experience once, make the best out of it. Oh, and always have a good pen handy.

Morey: No matter what the situation is, be yourself. I could never stress this enough. It is so much easier to enjoy your time in office if you be who you are. No one ever changed the world by being someone other than themselves.

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