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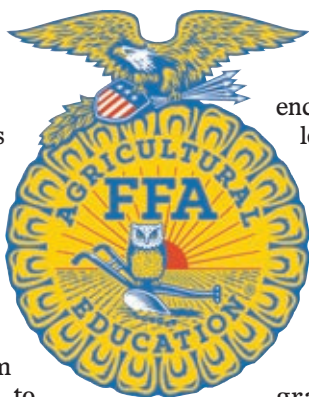
MHHS features busy FFA program

By Caroline Spears
cspears@baxterbulletin.com

Mountain Home FFA is a five-teacher program with an FFA membership of 427 students in grades 7 through 12, with 13 post-FFA members who have graduated and retained membership, enabling them to apply to American FFA Degrees next year.

The middle-school program focuses on an introduction to pathways, FFA and general agriculture. Studies at the junior-high school are targeted at offering agri-science and technology experiments/activities.

Introduction to agriculture mechanics continues to be a favorite among students



as the eighth- and ninth-grade students have the opportunities to develop basic skills in 13 different shop areas.

Studies at the high school are aimed at students interested in advanced agri-sciences with an emphasis on animal science, plant science, ag mechanics, leadership and career development. The high school program excels in its instruction of plant science, animal science, advanced welding technology, small gas engines, metal fabrication, agri-business management and leadership.

With an extensive show program competitive throughout the state, Mountain Home FFA has a diverse offering that includes all species: broilers, meat rabbits, sheep, goats, swine and beef cattle. All instructors benefit from the use of an Animal Science Laboratory/FFA Show Barn and a



Members of the Mountain Home FFA program are pictured outside the University of Arkansas' Razorback Stadium in Fayetteville. SUBMITTED PHOTO

state-of-the-art greenhouse.

The show barn currently includes 20-30 stalls, digital livestock scales, automatic insect control, small-animal walker, livestock treadmill, classroom area, incubator, temperature-controlled

poultry room and a one-acre pasture.

FFA instructors Jacquie Albright and Josh Baker reflect on their respective backgrounds in the program:

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Members of the Mountain Home FFA program prepare to ride in the annual Mountain Home Chamber of Commerce Christmas parade. SUBMITTED PHOTO

MHHS

Continued from Page 3

“I was a member of FFA, serving as president of the Mountain Home FFA Chapter in 1986 as one of only three female FFA members of our chapter,” Albright began. “Currently, females make up over 44 percent of membership nationwide and more locally.

“I joined FFA in 1982 as a ninth-grader as we did not have a seventh- or eighth-grade program then,” Albright continued, “The Junior High Ag building was across town in a small rock building where the Pinkston Car Loading now sits on the south side of the building. The High School FFA Barn was built this year (1982) and has been enlarged and rebuilt twice. I am now in my 32nd year of teaching agriculture, with 31 years at the junior high and my first year at Bruno Pyatt. When I began teaching, we were a two-teacher program for grades 9-12 (Mr. Roger Steele at the High School and myself at the Junior High). We are now a five-teacher program.”

“I was a member of Mountain Home FFA from 1993-1998,” Baker began as he described his own experience. “I learned so much during my time as a member.



Mountain Home High School FFA member Madison Hutson is serving as State FFA Secretary for the 2023-24 school year in Arkansas.

“I was a member of FFA, serving as president of the Mountain Home FFA Chapter in 1986 as one of only three female FFA members of our chapter. Currently, females make up over 44 percent of membership nationwide and more locally.”

— **Jacquie Albright**
FFA Instructor

I learned a lot about agronomy, animal science, woodworking and welding that helped me not only in life but prepared me for my career in Agriculture Education. Additionally I served as an officer for four years, including being Chapter president my senior year. My favorite trips were

the state and national FFA Convention where I made lifelong friendships and memories.”

Baker continued, describing some aspects and accomplishments this year that their team is proud of, “One big thing that comes to mind is we had a farm business team that was top 10 in the nation. We competed at the national FFA convention back in October and that big finish was kind of a highlight. Also, Josie Kelly was our national officer candidate, so to have a national officer candidate from our chapter was a pretty big deal.

“On a local level, we’re proud of keeping students engaged in events and letting them have experiences both inside and outside of the school. Our program is pretty totally complete. Mr. Carpenter does a fantastic job in the shop. He’s produced a lot of cool stuff with the kids that built trailers, storage buildings, smokers and lots of different things in the shop. Also, Mr. White has an awesome greenhouse that’s full of plants, and we’ll be having a

big plant sale in April,” Baker concluded. Carson White, plant-science instructor for MHHS Ag Department, joined the conversation to add, “I think for me a lot of the value of the FFA comes from helping kids figure out what they’re interested in — what’s available after high school besides the usual stuff that they might think of. Something different, like something involved with animal science or plant science, or trades and hands-on skills. I think that’s one of the most useful things we could show them.”

As the top school-based youth leadership development organization in the nation, FFA helps young people meet new agricultural challenges by developing their unique talents and exploring their interests in a broad range of career pathways. FFA members aspire to be our future leaders, our future food suppliers, our future innovators and more.

“
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— Carson White
Plant-Science Instructor
for MHHS Ag Department



Mountain Home FFA students harvest greens during an on-campus activity. The program features a fully functional greenhouse lead by plant-science instructor Carson White. SUBMITTED PHOTO

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FFA Week shines at Norfolk

By Caroline Spears
cspears@baxterbulletin.com

FFA Week 2024 kicked off strong with schools in the area participating in the nationally recognized week that brought kids

together in the name of agriculture and business success.

Norfolk High School was abuzz last Thursday with differing levels of involvement with FFA, beginning with “Green Hand Day,” a day where new members of FFA have their hands dyed green to symbolize their new journey into the program. Green Hands typically covers grades 8-9.

“It raises questions with teachers and kids when they see the green hands,” explained Brandy Hughes, FFA Alumni president and science teacher. “We love to promote agriculture and the successes of the students throughout the year. Through the FFA, we provide several fun and promotional things to get the kids out into the community and get involved with these fields.”

Hughes stated that time also is spent within the program preparing for the annual Career Development event in April, where the schools will compete with different teams. Norfolk, Hughes explained, has two teams: Food Science team and Meat Evaluation team.

“During a normal year, we’d probably have more teams but we’ve tried to hone it down to these two to really focus on them and are looking forward to the state

competition in April,” she said. “We’ve spent time gathering our materials, getting our team built and studying, along with using team building classes that have been going on all week. Kids seem to have a really great time with it where they can participate in some challenges and win some prizes.”

At the time last Thursday, Hughes was in the Agriculture Building of Norfolk High assisting other teachers and students with a potluck that was sponsored by the alumni. Meat was brought in, and the students were entrusted to bring sides to go along with the savory lunch menu.

“As the president, I’m so thankful to have a great team behind me to where we have all worked through the transition period between AG teachers,”

Hughes stated. “We raised money for the chapters so the kids have all the opportunities to do the things they want to do.”

She stated that last November, a leadership contest was held where students from all over competed in a parliamentary procedure, job interview, opening/closing ceremonies and prepared speaking events.

“We were able to raise money for our kids to go and travel,” she said. “That was highly successful.”

Hughes said that the next day, Friday, would be a chance for the kids to just relax and have fun with popcorn and movies all day long. “It’s going to be a fun, relaxing chapter-building time where we



The selling points for someone who is interested in giving FFA and agriculture a try is that the FFA provides a place for students to explore a lot of different interests, such as welding, animal showing and produce, where, if you’re inclined, can grow different selections of produce in a greenhouse,” Hughes said. “This can be for anyone who is interested in hunting, fishing, building food plots ... pretty much anything that encompasses how we feed America.”

— Brandy Hughes
FFA Alumni President
and Science Teacher



A Norfolk FFA member shows off awards won at the Northwest Arkansas District Fair in Harrison. SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Norfolk FFA member Warren Louque shows his hand after participating in Greenhand Day, an activity for all first-year FFA members to participate.

just reflect and look forward to what the future holds,” she explained.

She went on to say that the program always is attempting to increase numbers and increase awareness in the community about all the opportunities that the agriculture programs provide to the students and the community.

“The selling points for someone who is interested in giving FFA and agriculture a try is that the FFA provides a place for students to explore a lot of different interests, such as welding, animal showing and produce, where, if you’re inclined, can grow different selections of produce in a greenhouse,” Hughes said. “This can be for anyone who is interested in hunting, fishing, building food plots ... pretty much anything that encompasses how we feed America.”

Hughes said that many students likely associate FFA with just the aspect of farming and showing animals and crops, but that there are so many different avenues that can be explored within the program.

“When I think of FFA, my mind goes to all the different things like marketing, web design, transportation of food, as well as teaching our kids how to speak in public,” Hughes said. “Congress is a big thing that has to do with our policies and the policies in America affect our farmers. Our kids have to learn how to speak to them and sell it.”

Hughes stressed that they try to promote leadership and confidence to address these opportunities such as speaking in front of Congress.

“That’s why I became a teacher,” Hughes said. “FFA was a life-changing thing for me when I was a kid, so today I have been teaching for eight years now, and I love helping out in all aspects of this program, seeing as how I have kids who are coming up into the program.”

Hughes said that her son will be entering seventh grade next year with the anticipation of joining the program.

“I can’t wait to see what he enjoys about FFA; I know it might be a lot different than what I enjoyed about it, but there are so many different ways he and the others can go with it.”

Hughes said that another thing she appreciates about the program is the fact that it provides a hands-on experience of learning for students in a way that they are able to understand.

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Norfolk FFA member Kelsey Moore is shown competing in the Oreo Challenge, one of many fun activities held during National FFA week at the school. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

began small, but over time it really grew.”

Hughes also raised pigs as a part of the program, and that ultimately afforded her a scholarship to go to college.

“There is so much more to the agriculture world than just animals; it opens so many doors,” she said. “I would recommend FFA to anyone.”

Blake Peter, a Norfolk freshman, took encouragement to heart and decided to join the program. Though he is not interested in the animal showing aspect, he does enjoy the convention aspect and meeting new people.

“Basically, you just learn about farming and agriculture mechanics,” he explained. “It’s like going to the shop, sort of like welding and woodworking. There is also showing animals like lambs and goats and things like that.”

Peter stated that he really enjoyed FFA because of the numerous opportunities to meet new people.

“I especially enjoy going to the AG conventions,” he stated. “One day I hope to be an AG teacher because my own AG teacher has done much to inspire me and has led me down this path.”

Peter said that he definitely has college plans, but that he is exploring the FFA program to learn exactly what scholarships and scholastic avenues open up for coming opportunities.

“I plan to pursue multiple degrees and hopefully get a job at this school one day,” he said, “But if not this school, I’ll definitely want one in a school nearby.”

“There are important questions the program makes you ask, such as, ‘Where does our food and clothing come from? Where would we be without agriculture?’” Hughes continued, “That’s how we begin the program with our freshman agriculture classes; we allow them to see how it encompasses government and history. When our kids begin to realize that the program is not just the stereotypical agriculture program and that it can take you in many different directions, it really opens the kids up to a world of possibilities.”

Hughes herself was part of a parliamentary-procedure routine where she served as president.

“I really enjoyed that time because it forced me out of my comfort zone,” she said. “It got me out of my comfort zone with public speaking, and once I conquered that, my AG teacher began to push me to run for state office where I became State FFA Officer.”

Hughes explained that this position allowed her to travel to different convention locations, such as Washington D.C. and Indianapolis.

“It was so rewarding to sit down with CEOs of different organizations and learn how agriculture affects our economy,” she said. “I loved that. It



Members of the Norfolk FFA program are shown outside Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, Ind., while attending the national convention. The stadium is home to the NFL’s Indianapolis Colts.

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MHHS alum KICKS OFF FFA Week



Dominc Pizzimenti served as state VP during tenure

By Cole Sherwood

csherwood@baxterbulletin.com

National FFA Week embraces more than 95 years of FFA traditions while looking forward to the organization's future. More than 945,000 members participated in recent National FFA Week activities at local, state and national levels.

Dominc Pizzimenti arrived in Mountain Home from Seattle on Friday, Feb. 23, to speak to the Mountain Home FFA chapter students at its FFA Week Breakfast. Currently enlisted in the U.S. Army, Pizzimenti is a 2020 graduate of Mountain Home High School who was very involved in the program where he served as Mountain Home High

School FFA secretary, earned first-place rankings at the 2018 National FFA Convention as part of the agriculture communications team and went on to be elected as the state's FFA Eastern vice president.

Standing before the students, teachers and guests in attendance, Pizzimenti spoke of the program's lofty ideals, the power of authentic individuality and the rewards of perseverance in the face of adversity. "Ladies and gentlemen, fellow FFA members, alumni and guests. Today I stand before you, not just as individuals, but as a united force — the Future Farmers



In the fields and barns under the vast skies we find our purpose. FFA is not just about farming. It's about cultivating dreams, nurturing ambitions and growing into leaders who will sew the seeds of change."

— **Dominc Pizzimenti**
Former Mountain Home High School FFA Secretary

of America. We are more than just an organization. We are a community bound by passion, dedication and the shared belief that our hands, our hearts and our hard work can shape the future of agriculture.

Pictured above: Dominc Pizzimenti arrived in Mountain Home from Seattle on Friday, February 23, to speak to the MH FFA chapter students at their FFA Week Breakfast. Currently enlisted in the United States Army, Pizzimenti is a 2020 graduate of Mountain Home High School who was very involved in the program where he served as MH FFA Secretary, earned first-place rankings at the 2018 National FFA Convention as part of the agriculture communications team, and went on to be elected as the state's FFA Eastern Vice President. COLE SHERWOOD/BAXTER BULLETIN

“In the fields and barns under the vast skies we find our purpose. FFA is not just about farming. It’s about cultivating dreams, nurturing ambitions and growing into leaders who will sew the seeds of change.

“Each one of you is a vital part of this journey. Together we stand on the brink of endless possibilities. Let every plow we drive, every animal we raise, and every crop we harvest be a testament to our commitment. In the face of challenges, remember that the very essence of farming lies in resilience. Just like the seasons change, so do the challenges we encounter. But it is our determination that remains unwavering.

“As Future Farmers of America, we’re not just cultivating crops. We’re cultivating character, perseverance and the spirit of innovation. Let every sunrise be a reminder that with each new day comes a chance to learn, grow and make a difference in the world of agriculture.”

— **Dominic Pizzimenti**
Former Mountain Home
High School FFA Secretary

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the world of agriculture.”

“Embrace the values of hard work, responsibility and leadership that the FFA instills in us. The journey may be tough, the soil may be rocky, but it is precisely the overcoming of these obstacles that we discover our true strengths. Let us not only strive for success, but also for excellence in everything we do.

“Being yourself in the FFA is not just encouraged, it is essential. Your quirks, your perspectives and your authentic selves are the nutrients that enrich the soil of our organization. Remember, diver-

sity is our greatest asset. Whether you’re drawn to animal science, ag business or plant sciences, your unique contribution is what makes our FFA family thrive. Don’t be afraid to let your true colors shine. In a field of possibilities, the diversity of flowers is what makes the landscape beautiful. Your uniqueness adds vibrancy to our collective story. Embrace your strengths, acknowledge your weaknesses, and remember that it’s the authenticity in your voice that will echo through the barns and the fields of the FFA.

“Being yourself doesn’t mean you have to conform to others’ expectations. It means allowing your individuality to blossom. In being true to yourself, you not only enrich your experience, but also contribute to the rich tapestry of the FFA. So wear your FFA jacket with pride. Let the world see the genuine, passionate and authentic individuals that you are. In FFA we

celebrate the differences that make us strong, and it is in celebrating your true self that you find the greatest fulfillment on this remarkable journey.

“Remember this: FFA is not just an organization, it’s a family. Support one another, inspire one another and together we will reap the rewards of our collective efforts.

“So let us march forward with our heads held high, hands ready to work, and hearts filled with the unwavering belief that we are the future farmers of America, the stewards of tomorrow’s harvest and the leaders of a brighter agricultural future.”



Members of the Norfolk FFA program are shown with massive bale of cotton during a field trip earlier in the school year. SUBMITTED PHOTO

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MHHS FFA OFFICERS MEET STATE LEADERS



The Mountain Home FFA chapter recently received a visit from Wes Ward, State Secretary of Agriculture, and Shane Khoury, State Secretary of Department of Energy and Environment, as they toured the agriculture department as part of the Capital for a Day program in Mountain Home. Pictured are: (from left) Josh Dickinson, Parliamentarian; Stone Ramsey, Fair Board Representative; Lathe Parks, Reporter; Aidan Shrable, Treasurer; Kinsey Devine, President; Koury Ward; Taylor Albright, Sentinel; Hannah Baker, Vice President; Katie Lowe, Jr. Advisor; Hadleigh Baker, Secretary; and Haylee Silzell, 2nd Vice President.



MHJH FFA LEADERSHIP TEAM



Members of the Mountain Home FFA Junior High School Chapter leadership team include: Caylee Simmons, Elly Dwyer, Weston Bagby, Kendrick Sanders, Kayleigh Skiver, Josie Judd, Shanna Woodard-Lynch, Brooke Hicks and Haley Fowler. The group finished first in the subarea Leadership Contest and advanced to the District Leadership Competition. SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Congratulations area FFA Members!



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