

There's No Place Like Home

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There's no place like home. There's no place like home. There's no place like home. Can you see Dorothy in you mind? The well-known character from the classic movie The Wizard of Oz wanted so desperately to return to her Kansas home. In the Land of Oz, Dorothy was surrounded by unfamiliarity, oddities and peculiar characters. Her fondest wish was to get back to the place where she felt comfort, security and where she knew she was loved and accepted no matter what. I can relate to Dorothy's wish. You see, as a hesitant freshman, just starting high school, I felt like I was in the Land of Oz. Everything about high school was new and different. I felt a sense of uncertainty as I timidly navigated the halls looking for my classes. I may as well have been in Oz. I had so many questions. Where do I fit in? What do I want to get involved in? What does the future hold for me? Where do I belong? I longed for that feeling of home where everything was comfy and secure, where I could be myself. And then, I found the FFA.

I always knew FFA was going to be a part of my life. My older sister is a FFA member, my dad was in FFA and my uncle is my FFA advisor. Needless to say, I was strongly encouraged to join. I enrolled in 8th grade FFA and participated in public speaking as an 8th grader. But, it wasn't until I became more involved as a freshman that I discovered all the things I had been hoping for, an organization where I could be myself and get involved with countless opportunities that are available. The FFA is helping me answer all of my questions. I quickly realized that during high school, the FFA would be my home.

For over seventy-five years, FFA has been the home to hard-working, goal-oriented members who have reaped the benefits and privileges of membership. Today,

476,732 members call FFA home in 7,223 chapters in all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. That's almost half a million members, making FFA the largest youth organization in the world!

The great thing about the FFA is that no matter what your interest or your talent, anyone can find a way to get involved. Opportunities for leadership, skill development, personal development, and recognition in the FFA are limitless. Through FFA, members have the chance to learn about careers, improve communication skills, and develop and demonstrate responsibility. With 23 career development events ranging from parliamentary procedure to livestock evaluation and 45 proficiency areas as varied as agricultural communications and turf grass management, anyone can develop their interests and skills. Members can be rewarded for their efforts in all of these areas, as the FFA has an extensive award and scholarship program. Each year the FFA awards scholarships to students totaling in excess of 2.2 million dollars. Awards provide incentive for members to set goals and work toward achieving them. The result is determined FFA members dedicated to progress in their chosen area of interest.

A Chinese proverb says that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The first step in my FFA journey came last summer when I attended Oklahoma FFA Alumni Camp. The incredible experience I had at Alumni Camp helped me see the true impact FFA has on members. One of the goals of the FFA is to develop premier leadership in its members. FFA members are leaders not only of their local chapters and schools, but are also future leaders of our communities, and our nation. Perhaps the most important thing I learned that week at camp was the potential for leadership that lies within me. Edmund Everett Hale said, "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do

everything, but still I can do something; and because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do something that I can do". At FFA Alumni Camp I learned that I might not have the ability to do everything, but I do have the ability to be a leader. I have the ability to give of myself to meet the needs of those around me. I was empowered by what I learned about myself at camp and the feeling I felt the day I left camp has inspired me all year long. When I face something challenging, I remember, I cannot do everything, but I will do what I can and that will have a positive impact on those around me.

Another opportunity the FFA provides its members is travel and the chance to meet members from all over our state and nation. I was honored to be one of the members chosen to represent my chapter at National FFA Convention. As I witnessed the 47,000 blue and gold jackets flood the convention hall in Louisville, I learned that the FFA can be home not only to rural, country girls like me, but to anyone. The FFA organization is as diverse as our nation itself. FFA members can be found in every kind of community, from Downtown Chicago and New York City to my little hometown Wetumka, Oklahoma. More than 70 percent of our members come from rural, non-farm, urban and suburban areas, with the remaining 30 percent coming from farming communities.

We all know the name Michael Jordan. He is probably the greatest basketball ever to play the game. One night, he scored an astounding sixty-three points in a game. His teammate who was neither a star nor a starter, was asked: "What's been the highlight of your NBA career?" With a smile on his face he jokingly said, "It was the night Michael Jordan and I combined for sixty-five points." Michael Jordan's teammate knew that his two points compared to Michael's sixty-three weren't that important, but he still

had an important role to play. Someone had to be there to pass the ball to Michael. His two points were more valuable than he thought. Just like playing basketball with Michael Jordan, in the FFA there is boundless opportunity for anyone to get involved and contribute. Through my FFA experiences I have learned that my “two points” are worth a lot.

Throughout my life, my parents have worked to instill in me qualities and characteristics that they value. Qualities like respect, responsibility, dedication, work ethic, and loyalty. Maybe that’s why the FFA feels so comfortable to me, because these are the very qualities that the FFA seeks to instill in its members. The FFA is the largest and greatest youth organization in the world. Its mission is to “make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success”. I hope that one day the FFA could look at me and say, “mission accomplished”. The FFA is providing me that feeling of home I wished for by giving me the chance to be involved in an organization where I can be myself and find out how I can get involved and contribute. Dorothy said, “there’s no place like home”. But for me, there’s no place like the FFA.

Bibliography

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Speaker Certification

State Public Speaking Career Development Event Oklahoma FFA Association

I hereby certify that I meet all the eligibility requirements for participation in the state FFA public speaking event for the current year as set forth by the State Executive Committee and State Staff.

My speech entitled There's No Place Like Home

in the 9th Grade FFA Opportunities division is the result of my own effort and ability.

It is understood that I am encouraged to utilize all available training facilities of my local school in developing my speaking abilities and that I may obtain facts and working data from any source. However, when information from other sources is used, such as direct quotes or phrases, specific dates, figures, or other materials, it must be marked in "quotes" in the manuscript and identified in the bibliography at the end of the manuscript. Failure to do so represents plagiarism and will automatically lead to my disqualification.

3-22-05

Date


Participant's Full Signature

Randy Fields

Local Advisor's Signature

IMPORTANT: Attach a copy of the Speaker Certification sheet to the back of each manuscript.