

9th Grade Opportunities

What Can This Jacket Do For Me?

Erin Tilley
Ripley FFA Chapter

What Can This Jacket Do for Me?

If I could answer just one question, I know exactly what it would be

I would answer the simple question, "What can this jacket do for me?"

It starts with the corduroy, and what a way to begin

It may not be the fashion, but it has definitely set a trend.

It is guaranteed durable, and manufactured to last

Much like the memories of places, and friendships from the past.

And even though this jacket will one day surely fade

It will always brighten my spirits, to know the difference it has made

Next, we have these symbols, displayed proudly for all to see

It represents freedom, wisdom, hard work, and a bright future for you and me.

However, these are more than just symbols – they represent our past

And the countless people who came before us and worked hard to make it last.

You see this patch is very special, they knew it from the start

That's why even when it's behind me; it's still close to my heart.

My FFA jacket is very special to me. I can still remember how excited I was to put it on for the first time. It was a little stiff at first. It smelled new and it had a glimmer and shine about it that you simply can't explain. It was awesome! To paraphrase Dr. Seuss, ".....everything I ever needed to know, I learned wearing an FFA jacket." I truly believe that it can help get me as far as I want to go and that the opportunities available to me are limitless. For you see, wisdom doesn't have to be found at the top of

some special mountain, but can be found at stock shows, speech and judging contests, conventions and conferences – even riding in the Ag truck.

One of the first things we experience when we become FFA members is our introduction to the FFA Creed written by Mr. E.M. Tiffany. The beliefs, insights, and pride that Mr. Tiffany immortalized in it are just as true today as they were in 1928, and although it has been slightly amended to reflect an ever changing world - it remains a classic. Ask any member, present or past, and the chances are excellent that they can still recite some or all of it.

“I believe in the future of agriculture with a faith born not of words, but of deeds.”
“I believe in leadership from ourselves and respect from others.” “I believe in being happy myself and playing square with those whose happiness depends upon me.” These are my favorite lines from the Creed, but each member leaves the FFA with something to remember and live by. The FFA Creed sets the standard for how to live, how to work, and how to treat others. These ideals are practiced each and every day by those who wear or have worn the blue and gold.

And what about those colors, man what a combination

Just think about the blue and gold, spread all across the nation.

It signifies that the sky is the limit and that we're worth our weight in gold

I don't really believe that, but that is what I'm told.

You see when I put on this jacket, the experience has no price

And the sky is not the limit – now that sounds about right!

The FFA offers opportunities in many diverse areas, on various levels, and in highly competitive arenas. AGED programs train, reinforce, and enhance their members through a unique “hands-on” approach that ensures success and life-long learning. Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE) and career development events (CDE) are just two of the ways that members learn and have fun while pursuing their goals.

While participating in several of these activities, wearing my FFA jacket has been a symbol of pride to me. I keep it clean, and I wear it to show my commitment to the standards those before me have set. My FFA jacket somehow always brings out the best in me. It reminds me that leadership is more than being a chapter officer, that public speaking isn't as scary as it looks, judging dairy cattle and grading livestock teaches me to make decisions, and feeding my show lambs each and every day teaches me responsibility. What does my FFA jacket mean to me? Well, it has already taught me many of life's lessons, such as: “You don't always win, even if you think you should.” “It feels good to help others.” “Friends always greet you with a hug.” “How you look is important.” And, “It is always smart to bring an extra pair of pantyhose for official dress.”

However, perhaps the most important thing that the FFA has taught me is to identify and set goals, to formulate workable strategies and timetables to attain them and then act and work toward them. These are skills that will serve me long after my FFA career is over. I believe that no other class, organization, or extra-curricular activity can provide these valuable tools as well as the FFA. I have learned that we don't always achieve our goals, but that doesn't mean we have failed. As someone once said, “If you shoot for the moon and miss.....you will still hit a star.”

Finally, we have the zipper, it is often overlooked

But it puts everything together, like the seams inside a book.

And just like a book, this jacket has a story,

It has endless chapters about hard work, passion, love, and glory.

It will take you anywhere you want to go, to places you've never been

So wear this jacket with pride, the next time you zip it up again.

I am proud that I took advantage of the opportunity to enroll in Agricultural Education and become a member of the Ripley FFA Chapter. It has, and continues to make a difference in my life. It can mean so much ^{to} too so many. To paraphrase John Holt, "What makes people smart, confident, resourceful and persistent is not having access to more learning and resources, but rather being able to do a wide variety of interesting things that matter.....to do things that challenge their integrity and skills, and that make an obvious difference in their lives and the lives of people around them."

The FFA is full of opportunities that can make a difference in our lives. The FFA Mission is to make a positive difference by developing our potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through Agricultural Education. What can my FFA jacket do for me? My FFA jacket can take me anywhere I want to go. All I have to do is put it on and zip it up.

It is the best jacket you'll ever own, and that I can guarantee.

So now you know and won't have to ask, "Just what can my FFA jacket do for me?"

Bibliography

Barnes, Kelly (2003). FFA Goodwill Tour: The Jacket. State Dept. of CareerTech

Tiffany, E. M., (2007-08). Official FFA Manual: FFA Creed. Indianapolis, In: National
FFA Organization

Holt, John (2008). Quotes by John Holt. Retrieved February 27, 2008 from

http://quotes.gaia.com/John_Holt

Mozo, Jessica (2007). FFA New Horizons: Go, Team, Go. Journal Communications, Inc.