



**NEWS RELEASE**

**86th Annual State FFA Convention  
May 1-2, 2012 – Oklahoma City**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**State FFA Convention Unleashes Students' Power to Believe**

By: Emily Beanland, Media Intern

More than 10,000 Oklahoma FFA members representing 354 high school chapters across the state are expected to attend the 86th Annual State FFA Convention, May 1-2, at the Cox Convention Center in downtown Oklahoma City.

This year's convention theme is *I Believe*. Leadership is an important component of FFA. By exercising exceptional leadership skills, FFA members discover the significance of being a good role model, and most importantly, serving others. Through agricultural education and FFA, these young people are realizing the true power of believing in themselves.

The state FFA convention is the culmination of the year's activities for FFA members. It is an opportunity for individual awards and recognition, delegate business, officer elections, and a celebration of chapter accomplishments. The Oklahoma FFA Foundation has raised \$510,000 this year from sponsors who will provide cash awards, scholarships, plaques and honor banquets to award winners and degree recipients. Title sponsors of the convention are Blue & Gold Sausage Company, Chesapeake Energy Corporation, Devon Energy Corporation and Oklahoma Ford Dealers.

The state FFA officers, a team of eight student leaders, plan the convention and conduct the official ceremonies. The 2011-2012 state FFA officers are Courtney Maye, president, Haworth; Brandon Baumgarten, secretary, Oilton; Kaleigh Lynch, reporter, Owasso; Hannah

Nemecek, northeast district vice president, Skiatook; Andrew Aldridge, central district vice president, Comanche; Joshua Conaway, northwest, Ringwood; Kristal Williams, southeast district vice president, Latta; and Justin Turner, southwest district vice president, Cement.

Delegates from each chapter will vote to elect the 2012-2013 state FFA officer team.

Cain Thurmond, the current national southern region vice president from Georgia; will attend the convention to provide a keynote address and workshop for Oklahoma FFA members. In addition to sharing the agricultural education message, Thurmond will encourage members to take an active role in their local FFA chapter.

Oklahoma FFA degrees will be conferred on 727 members who, as a result of their agricultural and leadership achievements, have qualified for the State FFA Degree—the highest degree a state association can bestow upon its members. From this group, a State Star Farmer, State Star in Agribusiness and a State Star in Agricultural Placement will be named. In addition to student recognition, several adults will be cited for outstanding service to the FFA. The Honorary State FFA Degree will be presented to 94 individuals.

Other highlights include the announcements of champions in 49 agricultural proficiency award areas and 46 career development events, including public speaking and parliamentary procedure.

Educational and motivational speakers will provide keynote addresses to encourage members to persevere in their personal and agricultural endeavors. Speakers include Josh Shipp, originally from Oklahoma; Josh has established an international reputation as an inspiring motivational speaker with an entertaining, yet challenging message. Abandoned and abused as a child, Josh was able to triumph over the tragedy, and he continues to encourage young people to overcome struggles and live life to the fullest. And he does so through the power of laughter.

Also featured is Grant Baldwin. Growing up, Grant always enjoyed challenging and inspiring those around him to overcome obstacles and be something significant in life. Having experienced multiple divorces within his family, Grant knew what it was to turn hardship into hope. As a teenager, he began to see how he could use his challenges to encourage and empower those around him.

A total of 12 workshops will offer students the opportunity for personal growth and leadership development. Workshops will provide a variety of opportunities ranging from agriculture advocacy, healthy lifestyle choices, teaching agricultural education to becoming a medical doctor in rural Oklahoma.

One of the most exciting activities at the convention is the Ford Truck Giveaway. Those chapters that complete an extensive national chapter awards application are entered in a drawing for the opportunity to win a new Ford Truck for their FFA chapter. The Oklahoma Ford Dealers Association sponsors the truck. The drawing takes place Wednesday, May 2, at 6:30 p.m. Past winners include FFA chapters in Achille, Amber-Pocasset, Drummond, Guymon, Stroud Guthrie, Oklahoma Union, Thomas-Fay-Custer and Edmond. Last year's winner was the Claremore FFA Chapter.

The FFA Career Show, held in conjunction with the convention, will bring more than 125 exhibitors to share with FFA members a vast array of educational opportunities, agricultural careers, and effective fundraising programs and products. These exhibitors represent business and industry, colleges and universities, agricultural products and services, and other diverse areas that support or play a role in the total FFA experience.

During the Career Show, the Oklahoma FFA Alumni council will host a silent auction with all proceeds going to support the Future Ag-Ed Teacher Summer Academy and Scholarship Program.

Another exciting event associated with the convention includes the 86th state convention concert featuring the Josh Abbott Band, Tuesday, May 1, 6:30 p.m., in the Cox Arena.

FFA is an integral part of the Agricultural Education Division in Oklahoma's CareerTech system. With more than 23,000 members, the Oklahoma FFA Association is the fifth-largest state FFA association. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. To learn more about the Oklahoma FFA, visit <http://okffa.org>, follow @ffaok on Twitter or download the Oklahoma FFA State Convention mobile app!

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