



NATIONAL  
FFA FOUNDATION

# Blue Jackets. Bright Futures!

Summer 2020



*"Watching this community continue to give back when the community is in need itself, that spreads hope for everyone," Belmond-Klemme FFA Advisor Debbie Barkela said.*

## Students of Growth

### How One Iowa Chapter Plants Seeds of Hope

BY ABBEY NICKEL

After a vital community project was jeopardized because of COVID-19, Belmond-Klemme FFA Chapter's co-president Emma Carlson rolled up her sleeves and put her leadership skills to work to find a solution.

The Belmond-Klemme Community School District's community garden has "always been a blessing" for the Iowa community, Carlson said. But when the district had to transition to online classes because of the pandemic, she — along with her classmates — feared the project might be disrupted. But it was only a matter of days until Carlson found her answer: garden starter kits the community can tend to while they're at home.

"I knew this was something that was really important to the community," Carlson said. "And now we can bring the community together to keep it healthy."

Traditionally, the Belmond-Klemme FFA Chapter helps with starting the seeds in the classroom and later transfers the plants to the garden. But without students in the building, Carlson knew that wouldn't be possible this year. The chapter partnered

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### FFA Forever Blue Network Helps You Stay Connected



Former FFA members know that once you are in FFA, you are forever blue. With that in mind, the National FFA Organization recently unveiled an online platform to create closer connections between FFA members, alumni and supporters. You need not have been an FFA member to join; the Forever Blue Network offers something for everyone.

If you are looking to get in touch with chapter members from your past, if you're searching for a new career or if you are hoping to expand your connections, then the Forever Blue Network is for you. It's a hub for online social activities; a personal and professional development resource; a place to meet new people, reconnect with old friends and find new opportunities; a career and internship networking tool; and more.

You can join the Forever Blue Network in just minutes by connecting with your LinkedIn or Facebook profile, or use your email to register.

Visit [ForeverBlueNetwork.org](https://ForeverBlueNetwork.org).



*It's been 50 years since the 1969 National FFA Convention when women gained full, national membership in FFA. Women continue to shape the future of agricultural education and the industry of agriculture.*

## Opportunities for All

### Corporate Partners Support 50 Years of Women in FFA

BY ABBEY NICKEL

In the last 50 years, women have played a pivotal role in the National FFA Organization after they were officially allowed membership in 1969.

To commemorate the impact they've had — not only on the organization but agriculture in its entirety — the corporate sponsors of the 50 Years of Women in FFA celebration have worked to champion the women who continue to shape agricultural education and industries.

The CHS Foundation, Cargill, Carhartt and Ram Trucks have all supported the celebration.

"At CHS and the CHS Foundation, we are always looking for ways to empower women in agriculture," said Nanci Lilja, president, CHS Foundation. "This partnership was the perfect combination of what we stand for and believe in."

At Cargill, Stacey Smida, senior manager of grants and community engagement, says the company prides itself on having a strong group of female FFA Alumni. One of the company's top executives, Ruth Kimmelshue, also a former FFA member, created a video celebrating

Cargill's women employees for the 50-year celebration. The video was a key message point at the 2019 Glimpse of Cargill event, where 300 FFA members from surrounding chapters came to Cargill to learn about careers at the company.

"When women in agriculture have an opportunity to earn an income, the whole community thrives, productivity on the farm increases, household incomes rise, and children are better educated," Kimmelshue said.

Ram Trucks has helped spotlight women in agriculture through a variety of efforts, such as the "So God Made a Farmer" campaign that remains in the hearts of millions and also gave rise to agriculture as a career option to new audiences.

Ram also recently partnered with rising country artist Tenille Townes to honor the 50 Years of Women in FFA celebration with an all-female produced music video and an original song titled "In My Blood."

"Ram recognizes the importance of

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## Give the Gift of Blue Milestone Goes to Indiana FFA Member



*Made possible with funding provided by donors and sponsors, the organization's Give the Gift of Blue program reached a milestone 10,000 jackets gifted earlier this year. There are now more than 10,000 FFA members and chapters that have been outfitted with their very own official FFA blue jacket as a gift from the program. The 10,000th jacket was gifted to Allison Burns, a sophomore in the North Miami County FFA Chapter.*

*"I am very thankful for the generous donation," Burns said. "Having this jacket helps me further my journey into FFA and gives me more opportunities."*

*Jim Wildermuth, the FFA chapter advisor, nominated Burns for the jacket. Burns currently participates in FFA competitions, helps with community events and is active in the classroom. Before the gift, Burns borrowed other jackets of older FFA members to wear to her competitions.*

*More than 50 percent of FFA members do not have FFA blue jackets for official functions—it is traditionally worn as part of FFA Official Dress at the local level and for state and national conventions, competitions and special events.*

*To learn more about Give the Gift of Blue, visit [FFA.org/GiveBlue](http://FFA.org/GiveBlue).*

## How One Iowa Chapter Plants Seeds of Hope

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with a local business to create the kits, which include seeds, soil and other garden tools. Students then helped deliver the kits to anyone who volunteered to help with the project. Eventually, the crops are to be transplanted into the garden at school.

Debbie Barkela, the chapter's advisor, said the produce would be available in a blessing box once it is available.

"Watching this community continue to give back when the community is in need itself, that spreads hope for everyone," Barkela said.

The chapter is also involved with Growing Hope Globally, a program that works with farmers across the country to plant, harvest and sell crops while raising awareness and funding global food security programs.

Lauren Crawford, the chapter's vice president, has been leading that project — including growing the crops on her family farm.

"It really helps us make those important connections with the community," Crawford said. "It's important to have that, especially in a rural community where agriculture is so important, and so many people depend on it."

Barkela said it has been inspiring to watch her students continue to find ways to serve, even when times get hard.

"FFA is the perfect opportunity to gain those service-learning experiences," Barkela said. "I know this is helping to shape them into future leaders who take care of those around them."



The Field family attended the groundbreaking ceremony for the CoBank Center for Agricultural Education at Colorado State University. Pictured are (left to right) Brian Field, 1980 Colorado FFA president; Laurel (Simpson) Field, former FFA member from Golden, Colo.; Robert W. Field, 1948 Colorado FFA secretary; and Bailey (Field) Corcoran, past Oregon FFA sentinel.

## Why We Give:

### For Brian and Laurel Field, FFA Really Is All in the Family

BY ABBEY NICKEL

The family's ties to FFA span multiple generations — a legacy that the Fields say has led them into becoming lifelong supporters of the organization.

In addition to supporting the Oregon FFA Foundation, Brian is the chair of the National FFA Foundation's President's Advisory Council and sits on the National FFA Board of Trustees. And if you ask the Field family why they continue to serve and give year after year, the answer is simple: They want future generations to have the same opportunities they've had.

"FFA has become the lifeblood of this family," Brian says. "You can truly see the way FFA works through somebody's life if you look hard enough. If any family can testify to that, we can."

The FFA family tradition started when Brian's father, Robert, became involved in the 1940s. Brian, his brother John, and sister Kelley (Field) Sanburg were all involved in FFA and became state officers in Colorado.

Brian met his wife Laurel, also a former

FFA member, in college. Their three daughters were in agriculture classes in high school; Bailey and Madison were very active in Oregon FFA leadership programs. Bailey was state sentinel, earned her American FFA Degree, is now teaching agriculture and is FFA advisor in Medford, Ore.

After watching the impact the organization had on their children, Brian, president of Harvest Capital Company, and Laurel started donating both time and finances to the Oregon FFA Foundation to help more students across the state fulfill their potential.

"We wholeheartedly believe in the opportunities they pursue," Brian says. "That's why we continue to do what we do. FFA is still having the same effect on young people as it did when my dad was in FFA. That's an amazing legacy."

Brian and Laurel also help judge public speaking contests and mentoring state officers.

"To see students transform into confident, well-rounded individuals during

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Thank you for believing in the future of agriculture.

## Corporate Partners Support 50 Years of Women in FFA

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women in agriculture and is proud to support the National FFA Organization and its 50 Years of Women celebration," said Marissa Hunter, head of marketing, North America. "At Ram, we want to champion the women who are involved in such a vital industry through initiatives and programs that highlight their efforts and perseverance. It is essential to who we are as a brand because of how naturally it aligns with our mission and our values."

Carhartt, a supporter of FFA since 1997, is also proud to recognize the contributions women have made in agriculture and to encourage women to explore careers in agriculture. To learn more about the celebration, visit [FFA.org/50YearsOfWomenInFFA](http://FFA.org/50YearsOfWomenInFFA).

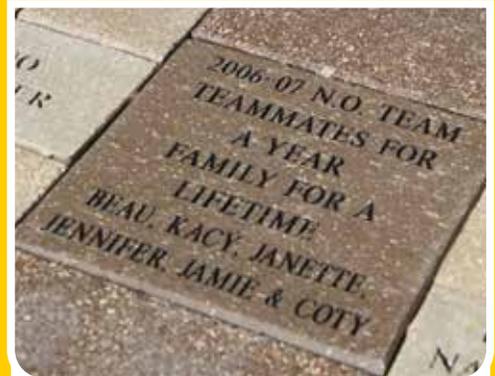
## For Brian and Laurel Field, FFA Really Is All in the Family

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their time in FFA makes every minute worthwhile to us," Laurel says.

The Fields have reminders just about everywhere of how FFA has shaped their family. A wall in their home embellished with FFA keepsakes they've accrued over the years is one of those reminders — along with knowing that they are continuing to invest in the future of agriculture with their contributions.

"We are preparing leaders to change the world," Brian says. "The experiences these kids get through FFA are life-changing, and we want to see that continue for as long as we can."



If you are looking for a creative way to celebrate a class of 2020 graduate or special teacher, consider a commemorative brick at the National FFA Center, and help pave the way for future generations of FFA members.

[FFA.org/PavetheWay](http://FFA.org/PavetheWay)