

National

FEBRUARY 18-25, 2023

FFA WEEK

FFA Week shines light on thriving chapters in Weakley County Schools

February 18-25th is National FFA Week, and Weakley County Schools is celebrating the organization's emphasis on leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.

Nearly 600 Weakley County students this year are choosing from a variety of ag-based options for classes including Large Animal and Small Animal Vet Science, Ag Science, Ag Mechanics, Ag Power and Equipment, Landscape and Turf Management, Greenhouse, Ag Engineering, Natural Resource Management, Applied Environmental Science, and Plant Science.

Students in the district who study agriculture are fortunate to have many essential community partners that invest their time and work into educating students.

UTM professors invite students into labs and/or offer expertise on the Livestock Production Farm related to topics such as emerging technologies in artificial insemination, estrus synchronization, ultrasound, and palpitation. The farm is also increasing research and demonstration plots to include both corn and soybeans. Other farm improvements planned are investigating the use of beef products from the farm in school cafeterias (already offering pork from student-raised swine), replacing cattle-working equipment, and building a structure with bleachers for students to observe procedures.

In addition, dual enrollment classes with the University of Tennessee at Martin's Department of Agriculture, Geosciences, & Natural Resources and the Weakley County Schools Livestock Production Farm expand the range of opportunities open to ag students.

Nutrien Ag Solutions and the Weakley County Farmers Co-op offer knowledge and support for the school farm's test plots. They work with students to help them understand foundational concepts such as analyzing data, collection, moisture content, yield data, stand counts, pollination rates, crop stressors, profitability, annual processes and methodology, and much more.

Tosh Farms provides the farm with essential protocols and hands-on, side-by-side training and education on vaccinations and hog health, swine artificial insemination, care of new-born pigs, feed mixing and grinding, care for growing and finishing hogs, and more.

Assistant Director of Schools Betsi Foster is grateful for the school system's community partnerships. "Community partnerships are essential to the success of our schools and programs. We are lucky to have so many local experts committed to our students and the continued growth of the ag economy in our region," said Foster.

In addition to gaining knowledge and academic credits, ag students support many ongoing project needs in their schools. They've designed and constructed guitar stands for art shows and built staging elements for the Weakley Playhouse's theatrical productions. CNC machines at each school provide signage and fundraising opportunities for various school-based enterprises. They construct various pieces, hang banners, and support the students and faculty through a multitude of additional daily needs.

In 2020, the Tennessee FFA Association, became an affiliated state association within the National FFA Organization. Under the affiliation program, all enrolled students in local agricultural education programs are considered official FFA members. The Tennessee FFA Foundation provides the financial support for Affiliate Membership.

FFA members compete in local, state, and national competitions. They fundraise to cover the costs of travel and additional resources. Fundraisers include fruit sales and FFA spirit wear sales. Westview and Dresden, which currently have operational greenhouses, schedule plant sales in the spring. FFA Alumni support annual auctions as well.

Dresden's 10th Annual FFA Alumni Meal and Auction is scheduled for Saturday, April 1, 2023, at Dresden High's Gymnasium. Food will be served at 6:00 p.m. for those who have purchased the \$5 tickets. The auction begins at 7:00 PM. Entry to the auction is free. All proceeds go to Dresden FFA.

Westview's FFA Alumni Auction and Dinner is set for Friday, March 3 at 6:00 PM in the Westview High Cafeteria. Adult dinner tickets are \$10. Children ages 5-10 eat for \$5, and children under 4 eat free. Proceeds go to Westview FFA, and a portion of the proceeds will go to the Westview FFA Scholarship Fund.

Ag teachers in Weakley County Schools are Jason Kemp, Jonathan Holden, and Jessica Browning in Dresden; Archie Rich in Gleason; Matthew Humphrey in Greenfield; David Hochreiter and Kyle Rogers at Westview. Holden, Rich, Humphrey, Hochreiter and Rogers also serve as the FFA Advisors. Lindsey Parham, Career and Technical Education Director for Weakley County Schools, supports their work.

To get more information about the FFA program in your community, contact any high school in Weakley County.

For more about Weakley County Schools, visit weakleycountyschools.com.

Dresden FFA Chapter is Springing Forward

The Dresden FFA Chapter is in bloom, and students are gearing up for another busy spring on the heels of a very active fall season.

Over the last few months, the Chapter competed and secured awards and participated in several career development and learning opportunities. The Horse Judging Team placed 2nd in the district for the 2022-23 school year, and the Soil Judging Team brought home the 3rd place spot. Officers and first year members attended the Greenhand/COLT Conference where they learned more about FFA leadership. Chapter members attended the Mid-South Agricultural Finance Conference at UT Martin to learn about agricultural finance. Club members also participated in the UT Martin Speaking Invitational at Trenton at the end of January.

This week, Dresden FFA announced Proficiency Award Recipients.

- Tanner Floyd, 1st in District and 2nd in West TN for Ag Mechanics Design and Fabrication
- Destanie Dean, 1st in District and 3rd in West TN for Ag Communications
- Adrianne Todd, 1st in District and 3rd in West TN for Ag Mechanics Repair and Maintenance
- Wylie Ogg, 2nd in District and 5th in West TN for Beef Production
- Creed Melton, 2nd in District and 8th in West TN for Diversified Crop
- Rebecca Frazier, 1st in District and 4th in West TN for Equine Placement
- Cayden Lowry, 1st in District and 2nd in West TN for Nursery Operations
- Miller Moore, 1st in District and 2nd in West TN for Swine Production
- Amanda Perry, 1st in District and 4th in West TN for Service Learning

Student interest in the club is growing among younger students, according to FFA Advisor and Teacher Jonathan Holden.

"We have a very active group of students who love to participate in events. It's also great to see a large group of younger members who are interested in learning all they can," Holden said.

Dresden FFA President and DHS Senior Adrianne Todd said that preparing Freshmen and watching them succeed is one of her favorite parts of participating in FFA.

"One of the biggest areas of focus for our club is working with our underclassmen to ensure that they are learning all they can and have the most opportunities to apply the skills they've learned. Now that I'm a Senior, I look at our Freshmen and Sophomores and see so much growth. It makes me proud for them and proud of our club," acknowledged Todd.

Todd is looking forward to graduation, and she said that her involvement in Dresden's FFA Program has helped prepare her for what's coming next. She said that their club truly embodies the FFA motto of Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, and Living to Serve.

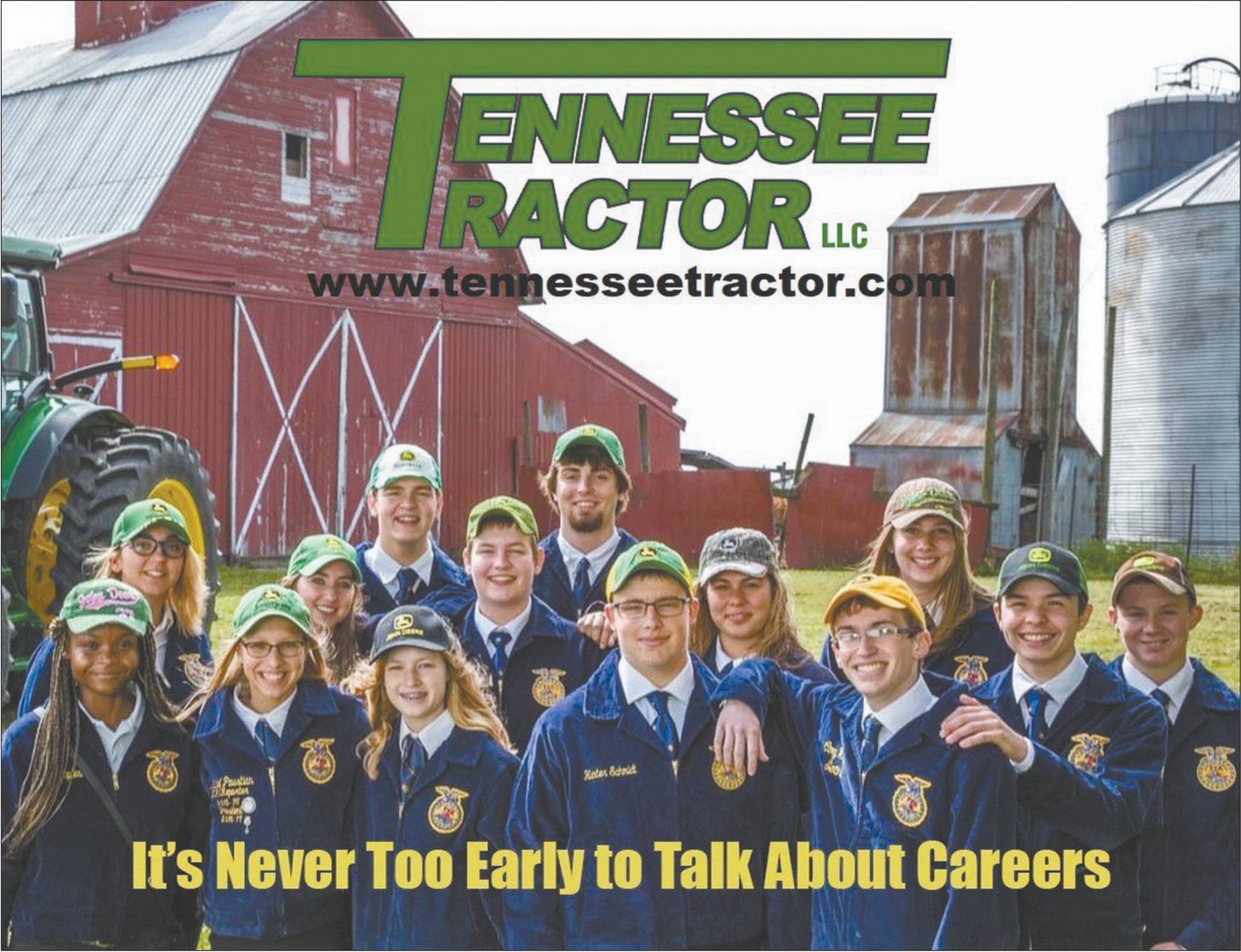
"What's great about Dresden is all of the opportunities for hands-on learning. We learn in the classroom, ag shop, the greenhouse, and on our county's own Livestock Farm. You won't find those opportunities everywhere," she said.

She added, "We do love the chance to showcase our skills in competitions, conventions, and activities through the club, but giving back to our community is important to our club. We work to build connections with people in our community and perform service projects that are meaningful



DRESDEN FFA OFFICERS — (From left) Alex Cravens, Parliamentarian; Destanie Dean, Chaplain; Amanda Perry, Vice President; Adrianne Todd, President; Miller Moore, Treasurer; Emma Harrison, Historian; Hannah White, Sentinel; Cayden Lowry, Secretary; Rebecca Frazier, Reporter; and Jonathan Holden, Club Advisor

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