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presents*



# Salute to Agriculture

- New educator at cooperative extension • Ag Census offers a snapshot of agriculture • Classroom is a greenhouse for horticulture students • Lot's going on with FFA youth
- A local farmer plants a strawberry patch



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Mary Ridout is currently a post-doctorate researcher at the University of Idaho. She will relocate to Weiser to begin her new job as the extension educator for Washington County cooperative extension in June. She has many research interests and is looking forward to getting involved in the community. Above, she tends to a greenhouse at the University of Idaho, where she also teaches undergraduates. *Courtesy photo*

# Washington County extension educator has a farming background and a Ph.D

*Mary Ridout looks forward to getting involved with community*

by Steve Lyon

The new University of Idaho extension educator for Washington County has a background in farming, wide-ranging expertise and research interests in agriculture, along with a Ph.D.

Most recently, Mary Ridout worked as a post-doctorate researcher at the University of Idaho doing studies in microbiology, botany and horticulture and teaching undergraduates.

Although she chose to pursue academics instead of farming, she has deep roots in agriculture. She grew up on a small forage and livestock farm in Tonasket, Wash.

Ridout said she looks forward to getting involved with the community and the farmers, ranchers and the many kids in 4-H in the county. She will begin her position at the county cooperative extension office in June.

“I have made a couple of trips down and have met some of the great people that live and work there. I think it will be a great place to live and work. So many have been friendly and welcoming,” she said.

The stated mission of University of Idaho extension is to bring the knowledge and research of the university to citizens across the state to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future.

With farming in her background, Ridout said the multi-faceted extension job in a rural county is a good fit. She enjoys working with farmers and agricultural producers.

She also likes working with plants and the people that grow them in crop production and horticulture.

She became an academic to answer agricultural questions. Working with extension gives her the freedom to do research and solve problems not just for her academic peers but for the people who live and work in agriculture.

“I can address real problems in horticulture and agriculture from what is wrong with someone’s rose bush to what grazing strategy may be best for a rancher’s new grazing lease,” she said.

“And I can help kids, such as I once was, to find their confidence and place in society using STEM and ag as mediums of education.”

Earning a Ph.D required years of research activities. Scholarship is a small part of what Ridout will be doing in Weiser, but it is still part of the extension job. She will be bringing some active research questions that are critical to Idaho farmers and ranchers.

“I will be keeping up some old collaborations and forging some new ones to address horticultural and crop science questions in Washington County and across the state,” she said.

The extension educator in Washington County focuses primarily on horticulture, agriculture and 4-H. It is a busy job that includes everything from working with master gardeners and livestock producers to organizing the annual Washington County fair and working with 4-H clubs.

Washington County’s 4-H program is strong in traditional agri-

culture while also embracing new technology and promoting STEM activities like summer daycamps. Participants in 4-H clubs from Weiser to Cambridge are involved in everything from raising livestock to building robots.

Ridout said she likes teaching, particularly hands-on STEM subjects and agriculture, and kids are one of the most rewarding groups to work with.

Ridout also will serve as the administrative director of the county extension office, supervising office staff, working with county commissioners, directing the educational programming for the office and managing the county budget. The annual operating budget for the extension office is right around \$145,000.

In an arrangement that dates back more than 100 years with the University of Idaho, all the counties around the state provide the facilities and the support staff, along with an annual office operating budget, while the extension educator is a University of Idaho employee.

When she is not working on the county fair, working with 4-H clubs or problem-solving the cause of a gardener’s wilting rose bush, Ridout said she likes to garden and do home landscaping, check out used book stores in search of old, rare volumes of the classics and agricultural science.

She enjoys going on hiking trips to search for rare plants and fungi. She also likes to collect house plants and “experiment” in the kitchen.





## 2017 Ag Census provides a snapshot of agriculture in Washington County

*Fewer farms in 2017 but they were larger in size*

by Steve Lyon

The number of farms and ranches in Washington County decreased slightly from 2012 to 2017, while the average size increased, and so did the total acreage in agriculture in the county.

There were 559 farms and ranches in Washington County counted in the ag census in 2012 and the number dropped to 535 in 2017, a decrease of 24. During the same period, the average size of farms in the county increased from 763 acres in 2012 to 876 acres in 2017.

The total acreage in agriculture in the county also increased from 426,494 acres in 2012 to 468,433 acres in 2017, bucking the state trend during the five-year period, which saw the total acreage in farm land in Idaho drop from 11.8 million acres to 11.7 million acres.

Those ag statistics and much more are contained in the recently released 2017 Census of Agriculture. The USDA's census compiles a massive amount of data on the state of farming in the U.S., Idaho and each of the state's 44 counties.

The ag census is conducted every five years and provides what USDA officials is a ground level snapshot of what is happening in agriculture. The census is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Even small plots of land – whether rural or urban – count if \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the census year.

There were 80 large farms and ranches in the county of 1,000 acres or more in size. Another 27 farms counted in the ag

census ranged from 500 to 999 acres in size. The number of farms consisting of 180 to 499 acres totaled 71. Farms from 50 to 179 acres totaled 91, and there were 266 farms of one to 49 acres.

The land and buildings on farms in the county appreciated in estimated total value in the five years from 2012 to 2017, rising from an average of \$762,163 per farm in 2012 to \$1.18 million in 2017.

In the area of demographics, the age of farmers in Washington County mirrored the graying of agriculture nationwide. Of those Washington County farmers and ranchers who were counted in the ag census, the largest group fell in the 65 to 74 age range. The average age of producers in the county in 2017 was 58.7. The average age of farmers nationwide was 57.5.

There were 221 farms and ranches in the county raising cattle and calves in 2017. Those producers had an inventory of cattle and calves that totaled 31,305 animals. In 2017, they sold a total of 34,113 cattle and calves.

There were 34 livestock producers in the county with an inventory of 7,452 sheep and lambs. There was not much of a swine industry with eight farms with pigs that sold 130 animals in 2017.

Washington County was one of 15 counties in the state that produced sugarbeets in 2017, although the acreage was small. In 2017, there were 14 farms in Washington County that planted 848 acres of sugarbeets and harvested 31,353 tons. That was down from 23 farms in 2012 that planted 1,872 acres of sugarbeets.

Across the state, there were 460 farms that harvested 168,376 acres of sugarbeets in 2017, a drop from 531 farms in 2012 that harvested 184,501 acres. Minidoka County led the state in the number of acres of sugarbeets harvested with 50,351 in 2017. Cassia County was second with 32,764 acres in sugarbeets and Bingham County was third with 21,872 acres.

Growers in Washington County planted 2,256 acres of corn in 2017 and harvested 496,412 bushels. They planted 6,730 acres of wheat and 5,751 acres of winter wheat, respectively, and harvested 496,864 bushels of wheat and 420,924 bushels of winter wheat. Farmers in the county planted 933 acres of barley and harvested 64,797 bushels. The market value of all agricultural products sold in the county was about \$50 million.

The state added farms and ranches between 2012 and 2017. Idaho had 24,996 farms in 2017, up from 24,816 in 2012. The majority were classified as small farms and were less than 50 acres in size.

Cash receipts in Idaho dropped from \$7.8 billion in 2012 to \$7.57 billion in 2017 as many farmers and ranchers in the state continue to struggle with depressed commodity prices, the Idaho Farm Bureau said.

According to the 2017 ag census, the dairy industry and milk and milk products from cows brought in the most money in Idaho with \$2.33 billion in sales, followed by the livestock industry, which sold cattle and calves worth \$1.78 billion. All crops combined brought in about \$3 billion.



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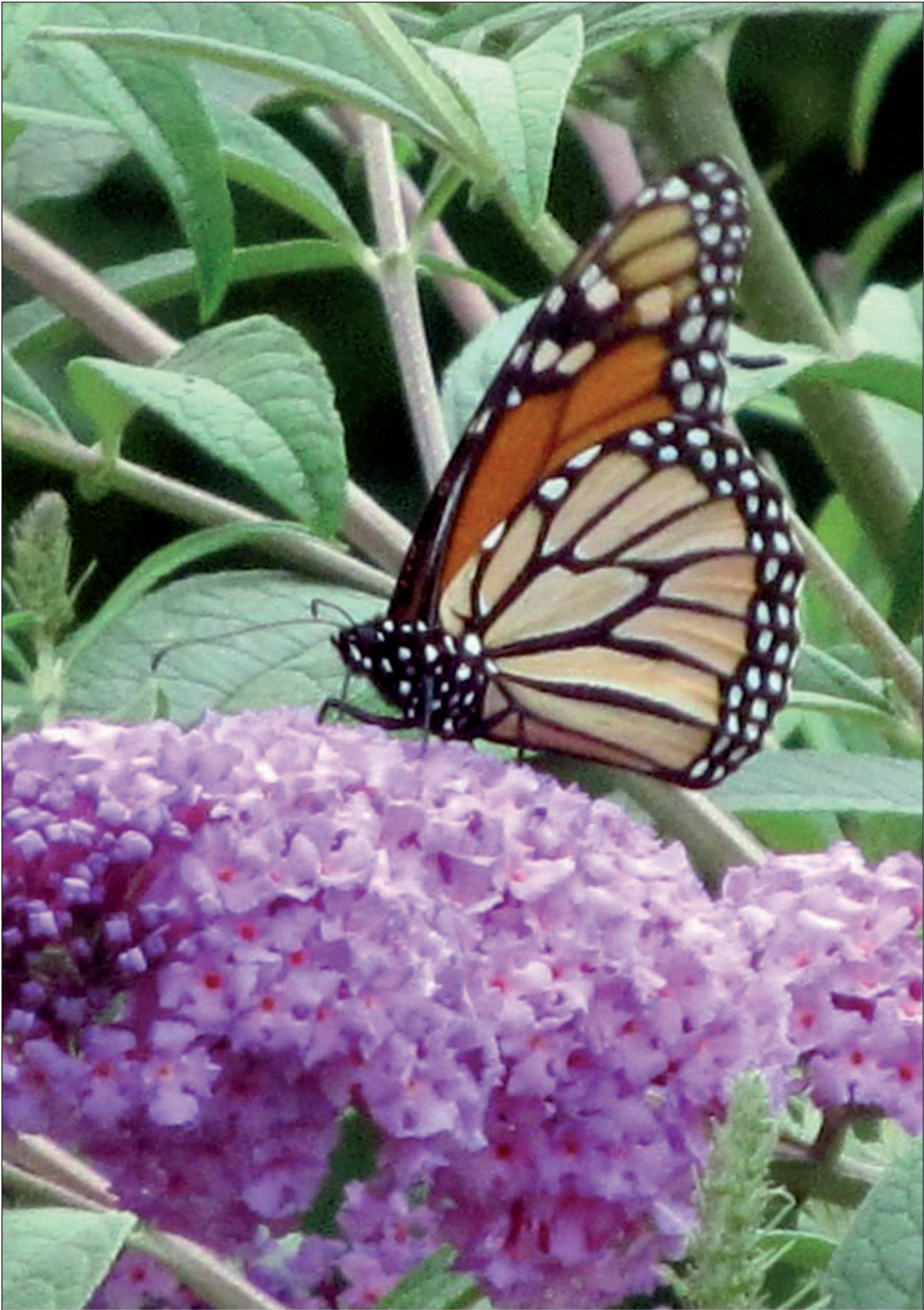
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# Help available for Idaho producers to aid declining monarch butterfly

*USDA assists farmers, ranchers manage for butterfly habitat and improve ag operations*

Idaho agricultural producers can voluntarily help the monarch butterfly on their farms and ranches through a variety of conservation practices offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The assistance comes at a critical time as recent reports show the western population of the monarch butterfly is at an all-time low.

“With the monarch butterfly’s western population in peril, we’re encouraging our Idaho producers to work with their local USDA Service Center and Soil and Water Conservation District on how to implement pollinator habitat practices into their operation for the benefit of our beloved monarch butterflies,” said Curtis Elke, state conservationist with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Idaho.

“NRCS offers more than three dozen conservation practices that enable producers to help monarchs

and other pollinators as well as benefit their agricultural operations.”

The overwintering monarch butterfly’s western population declined by 85 percent between 2017 and 2018, according to counts released by the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.

Nationwide, the species has seen population declines since the 1980s, in part because of the decrease in native plants like milkweed – the sole source of food for monarch caterpillars.

As monarch butterflies migrate, they must have the right plants in bloom along their migration route to fuel their flight. Producers – including those in Idaho, eastern Oregon and eastern Washington can play an important role in helping the species.

Through a variety of conservation practices, NRCS helps producers improve management of

healthy stands of milkweed and high-value nectar plants and protect these stands from exposure to pesticides.

Planting or protecting and increasing the size of native milkweed stands is critically important to rebuild the western monarch population.

NRCS also recommends Idaho producers to establish plants that bloom in late summer and early fall, as monarchs leave the region to return to overwintering sites along the California coast. These fall-blooming species include rabbitbrush, goldenrod and asters and sunflowers.

When combined with other monarch nectar plants, such as yellow spiderflower, native sunflowers and giant hyssop that bloom in June and July, when monarchs first arrive in Idaho, producers can help sustain monarchs through their whole time in the area.





The Weiser High School students enrolled in the applied horticulture class have been busy planting flowers and vegetables to help raise money to make some repairs to the greenhouse at the high school. They planted 180 hanging baskets that will go on sale this Friday, May 3. Seth and Logan Thomas and Tristan Padilla are pictured tending the plants. *Photo by Candice Schimmel*

## Horticulture students cultivate a variety of flowers and plants

*Sales to public start on May 3 at greenhouse at WHS*

*by Candice Schimmel*

Plants are growing and blooming in the Weiser High School greenhouse. The students of the applied horticulture class have been hard at work preparing a variety of plants to sell.

Amanda Chaney began this year as the new agriculture teacher, taking over from Stuart Nesbitt, who was the teacher for 28 years. During Nesbitt's time, the greenhouse was expanded to accommodate the needs of the class.

One of the big projects the horticulture class does is growing and making hanging flower baskets. One of the biggest and most loyal of customers is VIBE (Visually Improving the Business Environment). Since the project began in 2011, VIBE has bought hanging baskets of flowers to display in the downtown area every year.

Mayor Diana Thomas is proud to support the program. She said that the city gets compliments every year from people that come into the town for events. Visitors often say how friendly it makes the city look, and what a lovely addition they are to the downtown area.

"We (the city) think it adds a touch of beauty to our downtown," she stated.

She feels that the baskets give a homey and welcoming feeling. Thomas also believes, "It shows how the community takes care of the city. Thank you to the students for the hard work they do."

This year the greenhouse has grown flowers for another project "Care of the Cascadia." The students have grown flowers and some vegetable plants that at the

end of April they will help the residents of the assisted living center plant around the facility.

Starting on the first Friday of May, which this year lands on May 3, the greenhouse will open its doors to the public for sales. The greenhouse will be open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays.

Chaney is hoping to be able to set up one Saturday for selling. This year is the most hanging flower baskets they have had with 180 available. The price will be \$30 for one, or \$55 for 2. There will be 4 packs of annuals for sale at \$2 each. The annuals are marigolds, petunias, and moss roses. Vegetables, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and peppers will be available in 4 inch pots at \$1.50 each.

All funds from the plant sales go back towards the greenhouse. The building has been in place since 1998. Currently, the system that used to control the temperature and water system is completely broken and needs replacing. The siding will need replacing soon as well.

The students of the class chose what plants to put in the baskets as well as the plants to sell. The kids also wanted to offer the public more items, so in conjunction with the AG welding class, tomato cages and decorative plant hangers will be sold this year.

Any leftovers of plants at the end of the season will be donated to Love INC for distribution.

If you have any questions about plant sales, please contact Chaney at the high school at 208-414-2595.

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Hemp is a cousin of marijuana but does not contain THC, the psychoactive chemical that produces a high. While hemp is used in many products sold domestically, it is not grown in the U.S. and must be imported, mostly from China.

# Idaho is not ready yet for a commercial hemp industry

*2018 federal Farm Bill legalized the plant as an agricultural commodity*

*by Steve Lyon*

Idaho farmers won't be growing hemp anytime soon after efforts to pass legislation that would have rewritten Idaho law to decriminalize hemp and categorize it as an agricultural crop failed in the 2019 session.

For now, hemp remains illegal to grow or possess in Idaho. Legislation introduced during the session to allow hemp production as part of a new and regulated agricultural industry in Idaho didn't win the needed approval of lawmakers.

Rep. Ryan Kerby, who represents Washington County in legislative District 9, said part of the issue was that lawmakers waited too long in the session to get a bill introduced. The legislation that did make it out of committee was caught up in politics.

Kerby said it was difficult to get a bill that agricultural interests like the Idaho Farm Bureau and food producers and law enforcement in the state, including state police and sheriffs, could both support.

Other states are moving forward with establishing rules and regulations for a domestic hemp industry following the passage at the federal level of the 2018 Farm Bill. It legalized the production of hemp as an agricultural commodity and removed it from the list of controlled substances.

The Farm Bill went even further in encouraging a hemp industry by listing the plant as a covered commodity under crop insurance and directed the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation board to streamline the process for developing hemp policies.

Hemp looks like marijuana but does not produce a high. Under the provisions of the 2018 Farm Bill commercial hemp must contain less than 0.3 percent of THC, which is the psychoactive chemical found in marijuana.

The number of products that include some form of hemp is estimated at 25,000 and growing. Its short- and long-strand fibers make everything from rope and canvas to cloth, paper and building materials. Hemp seeds are a nutritious source of protein for humans and livestock, while hemp oils and extracts are used in cosmetics, soaps, plastics and lubricants.

Many products containing hemp can be purchased off the shelf at the grocery store, but none of the hemp that went into those products was grown in the U.S. An estimated \$500 million in hemp is imported every year into the U.S., much of it from China.

The backers of a hemp industry argue that American farmers have been missing out on that income. Hemp production would also give farmers in Idaho and elsewhere another crop to work into their rotation. In years when commodity prices for wheat or corn or onions are down, industrial hemp could provide income as an alternative crop.

Farmers would not have to invest heavily to grow or harvest hemp. It is a low-maintenance crop and the equipment used to harvest it is similar to the equipment used for corn and soybeans. Hemp requires little water and can grow in poor soil. It can grow tightly spaced and will crowd out weeds.

The Idaho Farm Bureau has supported allowing farmers to grow hemp as a

see *HEMP*, Page 9



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Weiser High School FFA students create Easter bouquets at the school. FFA students get to do a lot, both in the classroom and out of the classroom as part of chapter membership. Working on the bouquets are, left, students Mia Stender and, right, Brady Edwards, while FFA teacher Amanda Chaney looks on.

# FFA is livestock and a whole lot more today

*Many members continue a family legacy*

by Candice Schimmel

Livestock judging, welding, floriculture, and leadership are a small sampling of skills that Weiser Future Farmers of America (FFA) members work on through activities in agriculture classes offered at the high school and the club. The Weiser chapter has 85 members, while Idaho has just over 5,100 members total.

Students can join FFA so long as they pay \$20 in dues, attend monthly meetings, and take one of the agriculture classes offered by Weiser High School. Amanda Chaney is completing her first year as Weiser’s agriculture teacher and FFA adviser. She previously worked three years in Utah as an agriculture teacher and FFA adviser.

Students have various reasons for wanting to join FFA.

For sophomore HaRlie Mackay, watching her older sisters at their events, and spending hours listening to her grandfather talk about farming and ranching instilled a deep desire to join the ranks of FFA.

“I always wanted to be part of our amazing Weiser FFA chapter. Getting to wear the blue corduroy jacket with the gold symbol across my heart, with my name on the right,” Mackay spoke proudly. She will be joining two of her fellow FFA members this June on a trip to Washington, D.C. for a leadership conference.

The blue jacket that is the signature look of an FFA student is a source of pride for members. Senior Trae Gluch said, “People will always remember what you did in that jacket.”

Leadership is a reoccurring aspect of FFA. Student after student accredited their time in FFA in helping them overcome shyness, helping them work in group settings, and being open to new experiences.

Riata Chandler, junior, said it well, “Not growing was never an option.”

“FFA has taught me to be a leader. Through the last two years I have learned a lot of life lessons and things that will help me for my agricultural future,” current chapter reporter, sophomore Maddy Erickson said.

Fellow junior Emily Mounts agrees, “Participating in FFA has changed my life so much. I’ve opened up as a person, I’ve become more outgoing.”

FFA can be as large or small of a commitment as a member wants. There are opportunities for competing, field trips to receive hands-on experience to compliment what they have learned in the classroom, and conferences to attend classes aimed at bettering themselves. Being part of FFA also opens the door for students to show animals at the Washington County Fair.

Gluch says some of his favorite memories are from showing animals at the fair.

The activities that the agriculture classes and FFA have participated in this year are varied. In the fall, students joined forces with the local Fish and Wildlife office and collected sagebrush seeds. These seeds were then cultivated over the winter by Fish and Wildlife.

In April, students helped Fish and Wildfire plant the new seedlings in the area burned by the recent Keithly fire. This partnership helps expose students to ecological relationships, and receive hands-on experience.

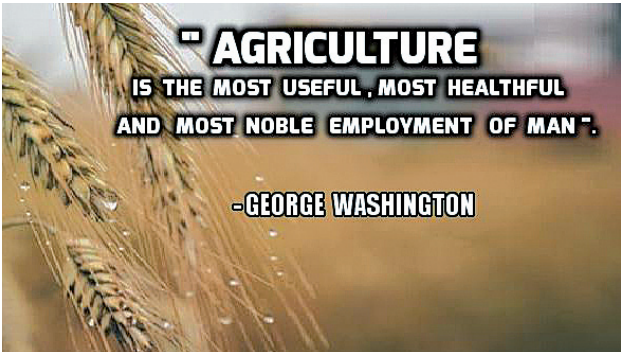
At the end of April, students traveled to Oreana, Idaho, where they were able to watch sage grouse lek. The Idaho Fish and Game offers this opportunity to show students how sage grouse affect the environment, and talk to local ranchers about how the sage grouse have affected their operations.

Then they were able to use the tracking devices that biologists would use when they are determining the amount of animals with a tracker in a certain area. The students were also given a tour of wild horse grounds, and golden eagle cliffs.

During the full day of activities, attendees were able to learn about the history of Silver City and how it was established.

“It’s an awesome day for students to take what they learn in the classroom and see it applied in real life situations,” Chaney said of the opportunity.

see FFA, Page 8



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Members of the Weiser High School FFA chapter recently traveled to Twin Falls for the annual convention. It was a chance for students to compete in a number of events that tested their knowledge on everything from horse training to scrap-booking. They also attended workshops and had a lot of fun.

# Weiser FFA sends 16 members to state

*Students participate in competition, learning sessions*  
by Candice Schimmel

The Weiser chapter of Future Farmers of America took 16 members to the state competition that took place in Twin Falls April 3-6.

The Weiser FFA chapter has 85 members. The ones who went to state qualified because they were competing at state, or because they competed at districts. Some members went to compete, while others went as delegates, and some went to participate in sessions.

Emily Mounts, junior, wanted to attend state for the sessions.

"I chose to go to the workshops because I love learning new ideas for my chapter and bringing back new informa-

tion for the team."

Learning more about others was something sophomore HaRlie Mackay enjoyed.

"My favorite memory would be spending time with the state officers and hearing their inspirational speeches," she said.

Rachel Galligar, sophomore, also didn't compete at state, but attended to gain the experience.

"I wanted to see how it all worked first, so I would know if I would enjoy being a part of it at Moscow."

Adviser and high school ag teacher

*Continued on Page 9*

## Weiser FFA students learn, compete

Besides field trips, students have numerous opportunities for competition. FFA competitions cover a variety of subjects, from dairy judging, to welding, to forestry, to parliamentary procedure. The National FFA competition has between 27 and 30 judged events.

One of Chaney's goals is to get kids out of their comfort zone and to begin competing in events that they haven't previously done. Sophomore Faith Mink has enjoyed the gentle push to try new things.

"I think I've been more outgoing, especially this year. I've competed in more things and have gone to more events than I did last year."

The next state contest will be the first week in June in Moscow. Chaney said there will be 16 competitions there.

Next school year members will get a chance to go to the National Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana at the end of October. There they will get to see even more presentations, connect with fellow members from around the nation, and take part in sessions.

All these events take money, which requires various fundraising. A popular one that happens every year is the sale of fresh and dried fruit.

The Weiser FFA chapter tries to cover as much of a student's cost to go to competitions, but often the kids have to cover part of the costs themselves. To go to Moscow in June, students will have to pay \$75, with the chapter covering the other part of the expenses.

Eleven Weiser chapter students received their FFA state degree this year at the state convention in

Twin Falls at the beginning of April. The next degree they can work on is the American FFA Degree, which only 0.5 percent of FFA members receive. The degrees take a lot of time to complete, and the recipients have a lot of pride in their accomplishments.

On May 2, FFA will have its banquet, where the new officers will be announced. They will then go to a retreat in the summer to begin to plan for the upcoming year and participate in team building.

Kelsi Marvin, junior, is the current secretary. Her favorite memory is going to her officer retreat in Joseph, Ore., last summer. "We went hiking, swimming, and it was such a fun bonding time."

To learn more about the Weiser chapter of FFA, visit <http://weiserffa.thea-et.com>.





Weiser High School FFA members recently went to the state convention to compete in events and also to learn at the many educational sessions offered. The students above brought back some awards. From left, Lacie Willet, Riata Chandler, Maddy Erickson and Kelsi Marvin.

Amanda Chaney was very proud of the showing her students had.

Junior Lacie Willet received third place for the work she did on the chapter’s scrapbook as the group’s historian. Every Idaho chapter has a scrapbook that is judged, and there are 93 FFA chapters throughout the state of Idaho.

Weiser also competed in horse judging. As a team, Weiser placed fourth in the state, while Willet was the fifth highest ranking individual in the event. Fellow junior Kelsi Marvin was a member of that team, and says her favorite memory of the week was walking across the stage with her team to receive their plaque in front of the whole state.

“Besides the horse judging competition, there was leadership workshops and kids sat through sessions where sponsors throughout the state were recognized,” Chaney said. “Award winners were also recognized during these times.”

Two delegates for the Weiser chapter went. They were senior Trae Gluch and freshman Rylee Willet. As the delegates they sat through business meetings and heard what changes the State FFA was thinking about making.

They then brought the information to their fellow Weiser chapter members who were at state. The chapter members got to voice their thoughts, then Gluch and Willet placed the votes for the Weiser chapter on the proposed changes.

Senior Mia Stender spent most of her week working on the committee that interviewed and elected the new State FFA officers.

“That was pretty cool for her,” Chaney said of Stender’s honor of being on that committee. “Each chapter can send two

delegates, and then they pick six to be on the committee.”

One highlight of state was 11 Weiser members receiving their state FFA degree.

“A state FFA degree is an award that they have to have earned or invested \$1,000 into what’s called their SEA Project,” Chaney explained. “Every FFA member must have a project that they are working on. It can be anything from running their own business, to raising and selling animals.”

She also has kids that have projects that are community service based, and those are based on hours.

Going to state is an exciting event for members. Junior Riata Chandler remembers her first time going as a freshman.

“I was the only freshman going, and it is safe to say I was scared,” she laughed. She said the older members really took her in under their wing. “I was told that I needed to quit being a spooked freshman. I listened. The result is my love of FFA.”

She has gone to state FFA the past 3 years and has loved it ever since that first time.

Several members said the dance that happens was their favorite memory. Gluch’s favorite memory was winning the swing dance competition.

Friendships gained not only with other members from other chapters, but deeper friendships with fellow chapter members is one of the highlights for all the students who go to events. Chandler is already thinking of the future, and the impact she hopes she has had on others.

“Most of all, I hope to leave FFA knowing that I helped to inspire more members to uphold the same values and to be the best they can be.”



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## Hemp remains illegal in Idaho

matter of policy with a couple of conditions. The IFB supports the requirement that growers of industrial grade hemp register their fields with the appropriate regulatory or enforcement agency. Just like the Farm Bill, hemp grown as a crop in Idaho would need to be at or below 0.3 percent THC content.

Rep. Judy Boyle, R-Midvale, who chairs the Idaho House Agriculture Committee, said she is strongly opposed to marijuana legalization in Idaho but hemp is not marijuana

and is a fairly new type of ag commodity for Idaho.

States will be able to adopt a USDA plan that will finalize rules on hemp production and will be developed in consultation with the U.S attorney general next spring. It will be less expensive and more timely to adopt the USDA plan that will allow Idaho farmers to plant hemp and develop the necessary industry infrastructure.

Getting a hemp bill through the Legislature this past session was not possible. A bill, H122, that conformed with the

2018 Farm Bill legalizing hemp and would have allowed industry development passed the House 63-7. The Senate completely amended it into a law enforcement bill. The House never took up that amended bill. The same thing occurred with the hemp transportation bill H300, Boyle said.

“It is very clear that law enforcement wants zero hemp in Idaho. I am a strong supporter of Idaho law enforcement but they should not be regulating an agricultural crop,” she said.

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Weiser Future Farmers of America will be sending their first representatives to the Washington Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. this summer. Attendees include from left, Libbie Rynearson, Faith Mink and HaRlie Mackey. The girls will attend seminars and do a community service project.

# Weiser FFA members will attend leadership conference

Students and adviser planning June trip to nation’s capital by Candice Schimmel

Three Weiser High School students will be representing their local Future Farmers of America chapter at the Washington Leadership Conference this summer. The national FFA organization’s WLC has a rich history and is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

Sophomores HaRlie Mackay and Faith Mink and freshman Libbie Rynearson will be traveling to Washington, D.C., along with the Weiser FFA chapter adviser Amanda Chaney at the end of June for the four-day conference.

This is Chaney’s fourth year of being an FFA adviser, and her first year working in the Weiser School District as the agriculture teacher. This will be Chaney’s first time attending the WLC, and the first time Weiser FFA has members attend.

Chaney would like to make this an event that members have a chance to go to at some point in their high school career.

Mackay is excited about this once in a lifetime opportunity.

“To travel to Washington, D.C. with two other girls and my adviser makes me so blessed,” she said. “I participate in FFA because I love talking about animals and I love learning about the history of ranchers and farmers.”

The conference will expose attendees to the four tenants of ME, WE, DO and SERVE. The first day of the conference will have the members exploring the tenant of ME, where they will examine what makes them unique and highlight their strengths.

They will also visit Arlington National Cemetery and take a night tour of the monuments.

Mink is already finding her strengths because of FFA, and thinks her involvement in FFA has helped her shyness. “FFA has given me the opportunity to strengthen my social skills,” she said.

The second day will focus on WE. They will learn about the power of diversity during leadership workshops and visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Meeting new friends is a highlight

of FFA for all the girls.

“The people involved are some of the best people I know,” Mink said.

Being able to work well on a team is a skill Mink knows is important and is looking forward to working on.

The third day, DO, will have the attendees visiting the U.S. Capitol to learn about leadership, and delve deeper into national issues and the steps being taken to solve them. Leadership is something all three girls want to bring back to their FFA chapter.

Mackay is excited to share what she learns during the convention to her fellow members.

The final day will see all the parts coming together when the members SERVE, by engaging in a service day project that will help meet the needs of Washington, D.C. residents. Rynearson wants to bring these skills back to the Weiser community. “I enjoy helping people,” she said. “I hope to learn many leadership skills that I can use to help my community.”

The girls will have to draw on all the things they learned and implement a community service activity when they return to Weiser. One way they will decide on their project is by using the sponsor forms from fundraising.

“We can use those sponsors as our connections to help us to come up with what is going to be the best use of our time to help the Weiser community,” Chaney said.

To raise the funds for the trip, the three girls sold Easter flower centerpieces. They were assisted by the high school agriculture classes in putting the arrangements together the day before they delivered the centerpieces.

They are also planning on selling concessions at the upcoming middle school district track meet. Another idea that they are talking about is raffling something. The girls are also looking for donations and sponsors. If you would like to assist in their trip funding, please contact Chaney at the high school at 208-414-2595 or by emailing chaneya@weiserschools.org.



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# Local farmer takes a shot at growing strawberries

## He'll have a stand along Oregon Highway 201 when they are ripe

by Nicole Miller

The farms in this area are known for everything from quality onions and corn to hay, but one farmer is hoping to have his farm be something a little different.

Bryan Bachelder grew up in Silverton, Ore., an area known for berries, and starting with strawberries, Bachelder is bringing his love of growing berries to the local region.

Bachelder moved to the Oregon Slope over 8 years ago and started farming right out of college. After working for Simplot and a few other local farmers, he invested in his own land and began growing the typical area crops like onions and corn.

After farming his own land, Bachelder realized there was one crop he wanted to grow the most.

Bachelder was employed by strawberry owners throughout high school. That's where his love for strawberries started. He thought he would never miss picking berries, but after moving out here, he realized how much he missed growing them and the sweetness of a fresh berry harvest.

Like most crops, strawberries are the sweetest when they are fully ripened on the plants. That perfect sweet berry cannot be found on the grocery store shelves when they had to be picked early to allow time to travel to the store.

Bachelder does it right,

harvesting only the perfectly ripe ones each morning. This assures his customers get the freshest and best berry possible. For Bachelder, that truly fresh berry is a taste of childhood.

"I love this area, but there is something about a berry patch that feels like home. It's been great to bring that here," Bachelder said.

Bachelder's first large strawberry crop was for the 2018 harvest season, and especially for the first crop, Bachelder feels it was definitely a success. The reviews from customers were definitely positive and he enjoyed bringing that little piece of home to the area.

He received such good feedback, he's taken on a little more land, and even hopes to add a little more variety including blackberries in the near future.

The only problem Bachelder ran into with his crop last year was that several people told him that about the time they heard the fresh strawberries were available, the season was over. The short season begins as early as late May, but wraps up quickly by the end of June as the summer heat hits, so it's important to enjoy the fresh berries while they last.

Last year the berries were ready by late May, but Bachelder does think that so far it looks like this season might be a little later. The plants are looking very healthy, but while



Bryan Bachelder grew up in the Silverton, Ore., area growing strawberries. He missed the delicious berries and decided to grow some here. Bachelder is holding some of his sweetened to perfection strawberries that are picked fresh each morning. He will be selling the delectable berries at his fruit stand located at 136 Grove Road on the Oregon Slope.

the cooler wet spring will be good for juicer berries, it may delay the harvest a little.

Bachelder's fruit stand can be found just a short drive away from Weiser at 136 Grove Road. Ontario, Ore., right off Hwy. 201.

Once the season kicks off he is hoping to be open 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Prices are \$3 a pint, \$15 for half a flat, or 6 pints, and \$10 for half a flat with day old strawberries.



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