FRANKLIN FFA HONORED AT STATE CONVENTION

SPRINGFIELD – Members of the Franklin FFA chapter attended the 98th annual Illinois State FFA Convention June 9-11 along with more than 5,000 other FFA members, advisors, and guests. With a 2026 theme of "Sparking Your Future," the three-day event recognizes achievements of Illinois FFA members, elects the major state officer team, and celebrates agriculture.

During the convention, the following award was presented to the Franklin FFA chapter with the photos captured in the Farm Credit Newsroom:

Illinois State FFA Degree: **Leo Bergschneider, Gavin Little, Natalie Long, and Carson Ward** were conferred with State FFA Degrees by the Illinois Association for meeting all requirements including productive financial investments and earnings in a supervised agricultural experience and FFA participation, leadership, and academic excellence. The State FFA Degree is the highest achievement an FFA member can achieve in Illinois; less than 2% of members statewide earn this prestigious recognition.

2026-2027 State Vice President: **Collin Johnson** was elected as the new Illinois FFA State Secretary. He was one of ten candidate finalists for a 2026-2027 Major State Officer position with the Illinois Association FFA.



Pictured above (from L to R) in photo **0C-138-A**: Collin Johnson, 2026-2027 Illinois State FFA Vice President

2026-2027 Section 14 President: **Natalie Long** was installed as the President of Illinois FFA's Section 14. The 25 newly installed Section Presidents are members of the 2026-2027 Illinois State Officer Team.



Pictured above (from L to R) in photo 0D-138-B: Natalie Long

Top 10 Chapter President: **Collin Johnson** was recognized as one of ten outstanding chapter presidents in the state who achieved the highest degree of excellence during their year of service to their chapter. The Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leaders sponsors the Top 10 Chapter Presidents Award.



Pictured above (from L to R) in photo 1F-138-C: Collin Johnson

Top 10 Section President: **Collin Johnson** was recognized as one of ten outstanding section presidents in the state who achieved the highest degree of excellence during their year of service to the chapters in their section and the Illinois Association FFA. The Illinois Farm Bureau Family of Companies Youth Education in Agriculture Committee sponsors the Top 10 section presidents award.



Pictured above (from L to R) in photo **1G-138-D**: Collin Johnson

Diversified Crop Production Entrepreneurship State Proficiency Winner: **AJ Harris** was selected as the 2026 State FFA Proficiency Winner in Diversified Crop Production - Entrepreneurship. AJ is the son of Jay and Mary Beth Harris. He is a member of the Franklin FFA Chapter, advised by Kaitlyn Kane and Brent Nelson. For his Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), AJ plants, fertilizes, and harvests rye, wheat, soybeans, corn, buckwheat, barley, and oats. His crop production and farm management experience includes preparing the soil, planting at the correct time, monitoring growth, applying fertilizer, and harvesting efficiently. By managing multiple crops, AJ has learned to be organized and make timely decisions during busy seasons such as planting and harvest. This diversified crop production proficiency award is sponsored by Bayer.



Pictured above (from L to R) in photo **3E-138-E**: Jay and Mary Beth Harris, parents; AJ Harris; Kaitlyn Kane and Brent Nelson, advisors

Students at the convention were greeted with activities including a career fair featuring colleges and agribusinesses and an opportunity to engage in the history of Illinois' capital city. The sessions featured addresses by National FFA Central Region Vice President Claire Woeppel, of Nebraska, and from each of the retiring major state officers.

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About Illinois Association FFA
The Illinois Association FFA is part of the National FFA Organization, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America. 39,890 students are enrolled in 403 FFA chapters in the State of Illinois. FFA is a national youth organization of 1,042,245 student members with a mission of making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. Visit www.ilaged.org for more information.

About the Illinois Foundation FFA
Illinois Foundation FFA engages individuals, industry, education, government, and foundations in securing funds to support quality agricultural education and FFA programs in Illinois, including providing awards at the State FFA Convention. To learn more and become involved, visit www.illinoisffafoundation.org.

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