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News Release

2015 Stars Over Iowa Winners Announced

AMES, IOWA—The 2015 Stars Over Iowa Winners were announced at the 87th Iowa FFA State Leadership Conference at Hilton Coliseum on April 21, 2015. A Star Over Iowa was selected in each of the four different areas: Agricultural Placement, Agriscience, Agribusiness, and Agricultural Production.

The Star in Ag Placement Winner is Spencer Pech of Starmont FFA Chapter at Arlington. Pech works on his uncle's swine farm where he helps finish over 10,000 pigs a year. He has invested over 1,700 hours in his SAE project, where his responsibilities include weekend chores, pressure washing, artificial insemination, vaccination, castration, sorting, and loading of pigs. The skills he has learned through his project such as record keeping and proper animal husbandry will be very beneficial to his career in the future. He is currently serving as chapter president. After graduation, he plans to attend Iowa State and major in agricultural engineering with an emphasis on land and resources management. Spencer is the son of Rick and Ann Pech. His current chapter advisor is Ms. Rachel Meyers, and his past chapter advisor is Mrs. Amy Grantz. His high school principal is Mr. Marc Snavelly, and his superintendent is Mr. Matt O'Loughlin.

Levi Banowetz of the Northeast FFA Chapter at Goose Lake is the Star in Ag Production winner. Banowetz' SAE program is Dairy Production. He started as a freshman with cows and heifers that he had previously shown as a 4-H member. His herd of registered Holsteins and Ayrshires has grown to include 19 Milk cows and replacement heifers. His reproduction program involves the use of embryo transfer and IVF technologies. He is currently serving his chapter as President and has held the offices of treasurer and sophomore representative. He was on his chapter's Gold placing team in the state FFA Agronomy CDE, the 3rd high Individual in State Ag Sales in 2014, and is the 2015 State proficiency winner in Dairy Production Entrepreneurship. After attending UW- Madison's Dairy Farm Management program, he plans to join his parents and older brother in the operation of their family Dairy where they have begun the expansion to 400 cows. Levi is the son of Darryl and Donna Banowetz, his FFA Advisor is Mr. Joel Frost, his high school principal is Mrs. Alicia Christiansen, and his school superintendent is Mr. James Cox.

The Star in Agriscience is Kayla Toennies of the Belle Plaine FFA Chapter. Toennies is a Borlaug-Ruan Intern at the International Livestock Research Institute in Ethiopia where she has done research, performed tests, and analyzed the data collected on forages that were malfunctioning in the reproduction process. She got started on her SAE by writing a five-page essay on malnutrition in Ethiopia and later attended the Iowa Youth Institute. The following fall, she was selected to go to the Global Youth Institute, and then applied for the Borlaug-Ruan International Internship and was accepted to be an intern for the summer of 2014. She learned about how both small and large farmers operate in a third-world country, and how a women's co-op functions there as well. Toennies is currently serving as chapter president and has been awarded the DeKalb Agricultural Accomplishment Award by her chapter. After graduation, she will attend Iowa State University to study Animal Science and minor in horticulture. Kayla is the daughter of Mark and Jackie Toennies. Her chapter advisor is Mr. Joshua Day. Her high school principal is Mr. Todd Werner, and her Superintendent is Mr. Chad Straight.



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Kaleb Kruse of the Maquoketa Valley FFA Chapter at Delhi in the Star in Agribusiness. Kruse markets genomically elite dairy individuals and embryos all over the world in partnership with his two younger brothers, operating under the business name of KCKK. Kruse's business has grown from one original heifer to now merchandising offspring directly from her. The use of technology such as embryo transfer & in vitro fertilization helped him to expand the genetics and merchandising business and contributed to his success. Kruse is currently serving as a Northeast District Officer and was on the state winning Dairy Cattle Evaluation & Management CDE team in 2014. After graduation in 2016, he plans to attend Iowa State University majoring in animal science and ag business. He also wants to obtain an auctioneering license. Kaleb is the son of Tom & Sara Kruse. His chapter advisor is Mrs. Dawn Mausser. His high school assistant principal is Mr. Kevin Kudrna, and his Superintendent is Mr. Doug Tuetken.

The Stars Over Iowa program is made possible with support from Iowa Farmer Today through the Iowa FFA Foundation. The National FFA Foundation sponsors cash awards for the four overall star winners.

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About Iowa FFA Association

The Iowa FFA Association is a youth organization of over 14,700 student members as part of 225 local FFA chapters across Iowa. 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. The Iowa FFA Association was organized by delegates from 23 schools at Iowa State College on May 17, 1929 and is an integral part of public instruction in agriculture. The Iowa Department of Education provides leadership and helps set direction for FFA as a service to local agricultural education programs. For more, visit the Iowa FFA Association online at IowaFFA.com, on Facebook, and Twitter.