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Georgia Shines with 20 National Winners at the 89th National FFA Convention

INDIANAPOLIS – The Georgia FFA Association’s trip to the 89th National FFA Convention was highlighted by 20 national winners and the retirement of Athens Christian FFA member, Abbey Gretsches, as National FFA Vice President. Among Georgia’s national winners were three Career Development (CDE) winners, a national 1st place CDE individual, seven national proficiency award winners, seven national Agriscience Fair winners, the nation’s Outstanding Middle School chapter, and the national winner in the Hall of States.

Career Development Events (CDEs) are team and individual competitive events designed to test student’s technical knowledge and ability in a variety of agricultural and leadership areas. Georgia’s national CDE champions include the Perry FFA (Nursery/Landscape), Cambridge FFA (Agricultural Communications) and Elizabeth Beacham of the Colquitt County FFA (Job Interview). Steven Dickerson, Dustin Pitzer, Dawson Dooley and Joshua Lee comprised the team from the Perry chapter that bested 42 other teams to win the national Nursery/Landscape CDE. In addition to the team’s success, Josh Lee was named the 1st place individual in the Nursery/Landscape CDE. The team’s advisor and agricultural education teacher is Dr. Argene Claxton. Katie Fishman, Makayla Crenshaw and Rebecca Wallace comprise the team from the Cambridge FFA chapter that won the national Agricultural Communications CDE by besting 35 other teams from across the nation. The team’s FFA advisor and agricultural education teacher is Mrs. Sarah Nerswick. Elizabeth Beacham, a member of the Colquitt County FFA chapter, outperformed 41 other competitors to be named winner of the national Job Interview CDE. Beacham’s FFA advisor and agricultural education teacher is Mrs. Adrienne Smith.

The Madison County Middle School FFA chapter was named the nation’s Outstanding Middle School chapter as part of the National Chapter Award program. Madison County Middle was one of five national finalists for the award, including Jefferson Middle, Pelham Middle, and West Jackson Middle all of Georgia. Each finalist chapter had two students make a ten-minute presentation explaining their chapter’s activities in the Student, Chapter, and Community Development portions of the FFA Program of Activities. The agricultural education teacher and FFA Advisor at Madison County Middle is Mr. John Lastly.

Mary Kaitlyn Wheeler of the East Laurens FFA (Agricultural Processing); Hunter Corbett of Lowndes County (Agriscience Research – Integrated Systems); Callie Warren (Fruit Production); Daniel Dobbs of Franklin County (Poultry Production); Landon Herring of Lowndes County (Specialty Crop Production); Murdock Wynn of Colquitt County (Swine Production), and Garrett Harrell of Colquitt County (Vegetable Production) were each named national FFA proficiency award winners for the success they earned in their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs. Only four students from across the nation are named National Finalists in each of the 47 proficiency areas. Georgia led the nation with a total of 21 national proficiency award finalists. Jess Aldridge of the LaFayette FFA, a finalist in the Wildlife Management category, also won a trip to Ireland as part of the National FFA international studies program.

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Georgia FFA's seven winners in the national Agriscience Fair included Tamara English of Dutchtown FFA (Food Products & Processing – Division 1); as well as Charity Brown (Environmental/Natural Resources – Division 2); Zachary Gay and Cedrick Montgomery (Environmental/Natural Resources – Division 3); Levi Herring and Conway McNeil (Food Products & Processing – Division 4); Courtney Cameron (Plant Systems – Division 2); Chandler Kudyk & Hunter Corbett (Plant Systems – Division 4); and Frankie Balmer and Jackson Sumner (Power, Structure & Technology – Division 4) all of Lowndes County. Georgia had national finalists (top 15) in 22 of 24 divisions of the Agriscience Fair.

The Winder-Barrow FFA chapter represented Georgia in the national Hall of States display at the National Convention and bested 25 other entries to be named the national winner. The Winder-Barrow chapter created an interactive display that featured the diversity of agriculture in Georgia. The FFA advisors and agricultural education teachers at Winder-Barrow are Mr. James Hale and Mrs. Ashley Best.

Georgia did earn two additional top-5 finishes in national FFA Career Development Events at the Convention. Georgia's CDE success included the team from Mary Persons placing 3rd in Floriculture and the team from Bleckley County placing 5th in Environmental/Natural Resources. Dawon Dooley (3rd place – Nursery/Landscape) and Dustin Pitzer (4th place – Nursery/Landscape) each of Perry, earned top-5 individual honors.

Nineteen Georgia FFA chapters received a national 3-Star ranking, the highest ranking offered in the National Chapter Award program. Those chapters included East Jackson Middle (Commerce), Eastside (Covington), Franklin County Middle, Jefferson Middle, Jones County, Madison County Middle, Malcom Bridge Middle (Bogart), Miller County, North Oconee (Bogart), Pelham High, Pelham Middle, Screven County High, Stockbridge, Thomson, Troup County, Wayne County, West Jackson Middle (Jefferson), West Laurens, and Winder-Barrow.

Eleven Georgians were recognized for their support of agricultural education and the FFA as part of the Convention. Mr. Elton Baldy (Moultrie), Dr. Lynn Barber (Manor), Mr. Pete Bennett (Millen), Mr. Chris Corzine (Kathleen), Fred and Anne Gretsches (Lexington), Ms. Jill Lehman (Swainsboro), Stan Mitchell (Farmington), Mrs. Ruthie Somerlot (Marietta), State Representative Chuck Williams (Watkinsville), Dr. Barbara Wall (Atlanta) each received the Honorary American FFA Degree for the contribution that they make to the agricultural education program and FFA.

One hundred and two Georgia FFA members received the prestigious American FFA Degree, the highest degree offered to an active FFA member. These students spent years developing their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs to reach this honor. Those receiving the degree include: Skyler Alexander (Houston County), Bailey Atkinson (Seminole County), Ian Bennett (Lowndes County), Sam Bennett (Lowndes County), Taylor Bishop (Southeast Bulloch), Knapp Boddiford (Southeast Bulloch), Caleb Bond (Franklin County), Tyler Brack (Bleckley County), Lauren Braddy (Montgomery County), Faith Bridges (Franklin County), Bode Brooks (Chattooga County), Mason Brown (East Jackson), John Brunner (Jeff Davis), Pamela Bush (Appling County), Cassidy Byess (Dawson County), Emily Cary (Franklin County), Bryanna Cash (Winder-Barrow), Kevin Charette (White County), Tyler Claxton (Perry), Johnson Collins (Pickens County), Erica Conner (Brantley County), Norma Amanda Cook (Appling County), K'Leb Crapps (Appling County), Juliana Crews (Peach County), Molly Cromley (Southeast Bulloch), Aspen Dobbins (Eastside), William Duckworth (Golden Isles Career Academy), Avery

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Duncan (Franklin County), Luke Frank (Madison County), William Joshua Gilbert (Franklin County), Mary Beth Gill (Brantley County), Julia Gonzalez (Effingham County), Tate Gosdin (Heard County), Courtney Taylor Gunter (Franklin County), Sarah Beth Hammond (Eastside), John Harrell (Seminole County), Elli Kate Hayes (Northwest Whitfield), Braxton Helms (Miller County), Hannah Henry (Wheeler County), Ben Herring (Lowndes County), James Hodges (Franklin County), Lucouis Hodges (Peach County), Kandice Hooper (Franklin County), Elizabeth Horne (Colquitt County), Ashton Hosta (Upson Lee), Arielle Hurst (Lee County), Chelsea James (Camden County), Brandon Scott Johnson (Newton County), Wilber Kerner (Mary Persons), Bryce Lane (Jenkins County), Savannah Locke (Bainbridge), Taylor Martin (Johnson County), Hannah McConnell (Dawson County), Erin McWhorter (North Oconee), Christian Meadows (Irwin County), Keith Melcher (Crisp County), Will Mims (Seminole County), Taylor Mock (Miller County), Katelyn Moore (Hephzibah), Taylor Newsome (Colquitt County), Hunter Patterson (Fannin County), Jerry Pearce (Seminole County), Henslee Pettigrew (Cross Creek), Ashley Nicole Picklesimer (Dawson County), Jeribeth Pickren (Miller County), Hannah Porter (North Murray), Emily Potter (Gordon Lee), Jordan Presley (East Jackson), Sara Prokosch (LaFayette), Angel Rewis (Clinch County), Cash Rice (Ware County), Wesley Ricks (Toombs County), Will Roane (Franklin County), Dexter Roberts (White County), Kayla Robinson (Ola), Landon Rowe (Irwin County), Emily Rutledge (Ola), Levi Samples (Dawson County), Levin Simmons (Madison County), Hunter Slade (Crisp County), Kandice Snow (Jefferson), April South (Franklin County), Tristan Spence (Miller County), Heather Stanley (Newton County), Courtney Stewart (Pierce County), John Stewart (Bleckley County), Molly Stutsman (Rabun County), Peyton Sweet (Ware County), Chloe Thomason (Franklin County), Haley Throne (Oglethorpe County), Caroline Waldrep (Mary Persons), Callie Warren (Lowndes County), Brittney Westmoreland (White County), Dustin Wheat (Gordon Central), Emily Whiddon (Winder-Barrow), Jessica White (Mary Persons), Amber Wilbanks (Madison County), Caroline Williams (Upson-Lee), Jarrett Williams (Appling County), Madison Williams (Winder-Barrow), Molly Williams (Jenkins County), and Daryl Williamson (Colquitt County).

Seven Georgia FFA members earned the opportunity to perform their musical talents at the National FFA Convention. Hunter Albritton, Flint Helms and Davis Towns (Crisp County), as well as Hayden Echols (Madison County), Brittany Heath (Arabia Mountain), and Tayla Scott (Screven County) were each selected to perform in the Talent program; while Blake Segars (Franklin County) performed in the National FFA Band. Albritton, Helms, Towns and Heath each advanced to the Top 15 round of the National FFA Talent competition.

The Georgia FFA Association was recognized as a membership growth state. This marks the 18th consecutive year that the Georgia FFA has increased in FFA membership. Georgia was represented in Indianapolis by 25 official voting delegates, and more than 1,500 local FFA members, advisors and Alumni from across the state.

More than 65,000 FFA members, advisors and guests attended the 89th National FFA Convention. The theme for the convention was *Transform*. A complete set of results and a variety of highlights from the 89th National FFA Convention can be found by logging on to www.georgiaffa.org.

There are more than 649,355 FFA members nationwide. The Georgia Association has over 41,000 members, making it the third largest Association in the nation.

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