



Minnesota's AgEd Advocate

Kari Schwab, Editor Spring 2014

MAELC Co-Hosts Legislative Breakfasts

The Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC), the Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators (MAAE), and the Minnesota FFA Association co-hosted six Legislative Breakfasts around the state to discuss Agricultural Education at all levels within Minnesota. Each breakfast meeting was well attended by approximately 180 legislators, agricultural teachers, students, and stakeholders.



Senator Patricia Torres Ray, Chair of the Senate Education Policy Committee, (pictured in the grey & white coat) talks with attendees at the St. Paul Legislative Breakfast

It is evident from several of the conversations that agricultural literacy and an understanding of current agricultural education programs is lacking across all of Minnesota, including at the Capitol, in the Twin Cities and suburbs, and even in outstate Minnesota. There is a need for unified messaging about what agricultural education looks like, why it is important and what can be done to support it. Although many issues were covered during these meetings, it became apparent that stakeholders and supporters of the agricultural community are eager for actionable solutions to address three main focus areas: the agricultural instructor shortage, continued support of the Farm Business Management program, and extended contracts for teachers. These focus areas align with MAELC's initiatives and we look forward to continuing conversations to determine potential solutions.



Representative Jeanne Poppe (right) and Senator Dave Senjem (next to Rep. Poppe) at the Rochester Legislative Breakfast

Thank you to all of you who participated! These events were made successful because of your help, attendance, and great conversations.



Legislators, instructors, students and industry stakeholders listen to a short presentation during the Mankato Legislative Breakfast

Minnesota Agricultural Education
Leadership Council (MAELC)

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Sarah Dornink
Executive Director

Many have asked about the status of the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resource Education (AFNRE) Blueprint, in which MAELC spearheaded the development of a vision and bold steps for AFNRE areas in agricultural literacy, secondary education, two-year colleges, farm business management, and baccalaureate and above education programs. In December, I presented a plan to our MAELC board that outlined three major initiatives designed to promote and expand agricultural education for the state. The foundations of these initiatives were developed based on the findings of the AFNRE Blueprint, and MAELC will incorporate them into its work over the next four years.

Initiative A: Structure and Branding

Making programs accessible and improving the understanding of AFNRE will be vital for continued growth of programs, especially to attract new and underserved/underrepresented populations. This can be done through the implementation of a strategic communication plan to increase publicity and enhance the AFNRE brand and reputation. We will need to demonstrate pathways for AFNRE career exploration and cultivate program models that are innovative and flexible which can be implemented into all secondary schools, while establishing consistent standards for programs. MAELC will also continue to assist in developing a fiscally sound Farm Business Management program with statewide program leadership.

Initiative B: Recruitment and Retention

MAELC has a long established investment into the recruitment and retention of licensed agricultural instructors and support of AFNRE programs. We will continue to provide support for the career lifecycles of all AFNR educators (e.g. recruitment, early career, mid-career, late career, retirement). A "State Leadership for Teacher Education in Agricultural Education" committee has been created to address barriers to licensure, provide professional development opportunities and continue the promotion of the profession. Finally, MAELC continues to explore options for additional higher education institutions to offer a teacher training program in Agricultural Education.

Initiative C: Evaluation and Funding

Funding is always difficult, and we will continue to explore additional funding sources, including those outside of legislative dollars, to support statewide programming. In order to continue to receive support, it will be a priority to demonstrate the impact of the MAELC grant and scholarship programs. Also, MAELC plans to perform assessment studies to determine AFNR instructor needs, measure statewide agricultural literacy levels, and research the economic value of the Farm Business Management database.

Although MAELC will take the lead in completing these strategies, successful implementation will involve multiple collaborations, and statewide communication and information-sharing with those in AFNRE and other stakeholders. MAELC will focus on these specific initiatives through December, 2017. If you have thoughts or ideas on how to accomplish these initiatives, I welcome your input.

Minnesota to Host National Teach Ag Day

Minnesota has been selected to host the fifth annual National Teach Ag Day Celebration on Thursday, September 25th, 2014 at CHS, Inc. headquarters in Inver Grove Heights, MN.

National Teach Ag Day is a component of the National Teach Ag Campaign that started in 2009 to address the nationwide shortage of agricultural teachers. It celebrates school-based agricultural education and encourages education advocates, especially current agricultural educators, to share with others the great career opportunities in this profession. The CHS foundation has been a sponsor of the National Teach Ag Campaign since 2011, contributing more than \$450,000 to programs that support agricultural teacher recruitment and retention.



The day will be full of activities including a two-hour, live webcast event that will be viewed by thousands of current and future agricultural teachers, students, supporters and stakeholders from all across the country. Approximately 100 state and national leaders, including current agricultural education majors will attend the event in person at CHS headquarters.

The National Teach Ag Campaign is an initiative of the National Council for Agricultural Education led by the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE). It is funded by the CHS Foundation and CSX as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. The campaign raises awareness of the need for agricultural teachers, encourages others to consider a career teaching agriculture and celebrates the positive contributions that these teachers make in their schools and communities.

MAELC is excited to celebrate National Teach Ag Day in Minnesota this year, and looks forward to continuing to help in the planning.

**For more information on National Teach Ag Day or the National Teach Ag Campaign, visit www.naae.org/teachag*

Welcome to University of Minnesota - Ag Ed!

Marianne Lorensen



Marianne Lorensen joined the University of Minnesota-Agricultural Education team in January of this year. Her career has been in higher education, including both student and academic affairs. She instructed leadership courses at the University of Illinois and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln prior to coming to the University of Minnesota.

Marianne teaches AFEE 2221: People Skills for Leadership and AFEE 5220: Special Topics in Agricultural Education and Extension. She will also have the task of developing other leadership courses.

Her current research interests focus on the development of socially responsible leadership, college student leadership development, and faculty perspectives about the use of service-learning in the leadership classroom. Marianne loves leadership and working with college students, and she enjoys being a part of the University of Minnesota.

Minnesota FFA Hosts Third Annual Ag Policy Bootcamp

Thirty Minnesota FFA members successfully participated in the Minnesota FFA Agricultural Policy Bootcamp, March 3-4, 2014 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in St. Paul, MN. This third annual Bootcamp encouraged and challenged students to push past their current knowledge of agricultural issues and policy, and become a more informed and active leader in their schools and communities.

Students were paired with agricultural policy mentors who worked closely with them throughout the conference. They also had the opportunity to hear from Commissioner of Agriculture Dave Frederickson, several state legislators, and a variety of other speakers.

Topics covered in the conference included political terminology and legislative committee structures, students' personal roles in policy engagement, and exploration of the legislative process. The students also hosted a legislative reception where they had the chance to interact with legislators and state department leaders. Twenty-six legislators and two staff representatives attended the reception.

This unique experience was made possible through the support of the Minnesota FFA Foundation and various sponsors, including AgStar Financial Services, Minnesota Corn Growers, Minnesota Soybean Council, Minnesota Farmers Union, Center for Rural Policy and Development, Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council, Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation, and Minnesota Turkey Growers.



Matti Boomgaarden (left) and Libby Schneider (middle) of the Pipestone FFA Chapter, and Suzanne Pagel (right) of the Fulda FFA Chapter learn about policy making from Rep. Joe McDonald (far left) of Delano and Sen. Bill Weber (far right) of Luverne



Minnesota Department of Agriculture Deputy Commissioner Jim Boerboom (left) and Commissioner Dave Frederickson (right) met with Ag Policy Bootcamp students to discuss current issues in Minnesota Agriculture

Joe Ramstad (left) and Laura Lutz (middle) of the Forest Lake FFA Chapter, and Emily Blosberg (right) of the AFSA FFA Chapter visit with Rep. Bob Dettmer (Forest Lake) at the Legislative Reception



Hawley FFA Chapter Spotlight - Advised by Dave Swanson

How long the program has been around?

The Hawley Agriculture program has been around since 1941, at least that was when the FFA chapter was chartered. There were a few years during World War II when the program was discontinued but then restarted after the war.

When did you start teaching there and how has the program changed since you arrived?

I started in the fall of 1986 and walked into a brand new shop and classroom. The program was fairly traditional when I arrived, and I was able to add several new classes over the years. A few of the classes I was able to introduce were Horticulture/Landscaping, an eighth grade Agricultural Introduction course, and a seventh grade Agriculture Technology class. I have made a lot of changes within each class over the years to keep the Hawley Agricultural Education curriculum updated. The FFA chapter has continued to grow and added a junior high program several years ago, which has helped to keep the numbers strong for the senior high program. Just recently, we started an FFA Alumni chapter which has been utilized to support the local chapter and bring people together within the community for a common cause.



Dave Swanson stands with student, Lane Alm, who received the 2013 Outstanding Young Farmer award

What are the program's strengths?

The Hawley Agricultural Education program has been committed to exploring agricultural careers. There has been a lot of community support for the program over the years, which has helped keep the shop and classroom updated with technology and shop equipment. Just this last year the community voted to add an addition onto the shop that almost doubles its size. We are teaming up with the Tech Education Program to add a machining component to the already strong mechanics curriculum.

Things that you hope to improve or add?

We are starting to change and grow as a community so our numbers in the elementary, middle school and high school are increasing. My hope for the Hawley Agricultural Education program would be to add a part time or full time instructor because class sizes have gotten too big for one instructor to handle. It is also a goal of mine to increase the numbers in the FFA chapter in order for more students to benefit from the leadership and career exposure that FFA promotes.

What are some of the highlights/accomplishments of the program?

I think one of the biggest accomplishments, and one of the things I try to instill in my students, is community service. Over the many years that I have served as instructor and advisor, we have been asked to do a variety of community service projects from landscape projects around town to serving at various community events. I still try to show and expose the students and members to the fact that small communities are built on the backs of volunteers and that is something that can be taught at a young age.

How many students do you serve (both in the department and in the FFA chapter)?

The Hawley Agricultural Education program usually serves over 200 students in grades 7-12 every year. I see every seventh and eighth grader for a quarter each year which provides an invaluable opportunity to expose them to the FFA and agricultural careers. Our FFA chapter has just over 50 members, which is a number that has increased slightly over the past few years. Increasing this number is a goal that I have set for myself so that other students can benefit from what the FFA has to offer.

What are you most proud of as a teacher?

I think most teachers would say that making a difference in a student's life is one of the highlights of their career. I am most proud of when a student comes back to visit and talks about the difference that taking an agriculture class or participating in an FFA event made in their life. I thank God every day, even the tough ones, for giving me the opportunity to make a difference in a young person's life.

MAELC Awards \$58,000 in Scholarships

An impressive collection of students are making the decision to study Agricultural Education at the post-secondary level in the state of Minnesota. MAELC is helping these students achieve their collegiate goals by awarding over \$58,000 in scholarships to students who will be first-year students and current students studying Agricultural Education. Over the past fifteen years, MAELC has awarded nearly \$430,000 in scholarships to Agricultural Education students.

Freshmen Awardees

NAME	AMOUNT	HIGH SCHOOL
Mariah Daninger	\$1,500	Forest Lake High School
Valerie Earley	\$1,500	Kingsland High School
Rachel Engel	\$1,500	Chisago Lakes High School
Madison Giese	\$750	Grand Rapids High School
Andy Houdek	\$750	Caledonia Area High School
Kennedy Janssen	\$1,500	Martin County West High School
Amy Jobe	\$750	Grand Rapids High School
Amber Mass	\$750	Brainerd High School
Jack Roessler	\$1,500	St. Charles High School
Brandon Thurk	\$1,500	Southwest Start Concept

Continuing Education Awardees

NAME	AMOUNT	HOMETOWN
Nathan Anderson	\$1,500	Appleton
Lisa Busack	\$1,500	Redwood Falls
Ethan Dado	\$1,500	Amery, WI
Michaela Gallup	\$1,500	Dassel
Vinzenz Karl	\$1,500	Arlington
Ethan Lapham	\$1,500	Caledonia
Sarah Lee	\$1,500	Poplar Grove, IL
Paige Lemke	\$1,500	Hutchinson
Brandon Roiger	\$1,500	Sleepy Eye
Eric Seifert	\$1,500	Browerville
Chelsea Vilchis	\$1,500	Shakopee
Hannah Wilts	\$1,500	Kerkhoven

M.Ed. Initial Licensure Awardees

The Initial Licensure Agricultural Education Scholarship program helps to provide financial support for students completing their initial licensure as part of their Master of Education (M.Ed.) degree in Agricultural Education at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

NAME	AMOUNT	HOMETOWN
Benjamin Johnson	\$7,000	Clara City
Tierney Lane	\$7,000	Minneapolis
Aaron Logan	\$7,000	Burnsville
Patricia Tax	\$7,000	Pierz

Student Teacher Spotlight - Stephanie Porter

Background Information:

Senior majoring in Agricultural Education from Mora, MN

UMN Activities/Offices:

Beta of Clovia Sorority, Ag Ed Club, Block and Bridle Club, MN Royal Executive Team - Sheep Species Chair, Ag Awareness Day Volunteer, MN FFA Convention and CDE volunteer



Favorite course taken while at college:

My two favorite classes have been Livestock & Carcass Evaluation and Sheep Production. Both allowed me to work hands-on with animals that I was interested in and provided many learning opportunities for my peers and me.

Highlight of College/AgEd thus far:

The AgEd Club 2013 spring trip to Louisiana. This was my first trip on a plane and it was an amazing experience. We learned about Louisiana agriculture and toured the bayou, Louisiana State University, New Orleans, and a few plantations around the state. I made a few new friends and would love to go back someday!

Why did you go into AgEd?

After I decided I did not want to be a veterinarian, I talked to my FFA advisor, Leann Pietrzak, about other career options that might interest me and she suggested AgEd. Between her and other mentors who knew the things I was interested in, Ag Ed seemed like the most obvious career for me to pursue. I also really enjoyed mentoring students in my home town, so that is what led me down the teaching path.

How was your experience student teaching?

So far my student teaching experience in Chatfield, MN has been a blast! I absolutely love living in southeast Minnesota and enjoy the community and people I have met so far. I have realized there is still a lot for me to learn, but that teaching is something I would like to continue doing, regardless of the ups and downs I have experienced.

What did you discover you love about it and what could you live without?

I love getting to know students better and helping them figure out career options and opportunities that they would enjoy. Creating fun projects that engage all students is also a highlight so far. I could definitely live without any more bad weather/school cancellations that mess up my lesson planning.

Future plans after graduation?

I hope to be teaching somewhere in a supportive, rural Minnesota community. I plan to continue volunteering with 4-H events and county fairs and also taking advantage of finding new places to fish wherever I end up!

Grant Spotlight - Sustainable Education Internship Center

Last summer, Spark-Y received an agricultural education grant from MAELC to revamp our office and lab space as part of our summer internship. Our goals were to expand our sustainable agricultural educational reach, build staffing capacity through leadership opportunities, and improve existing and build new sustainable agricultural systems. Last summer, we had around 25 aspiring and diverse youth in high school and college in our program, and this summer we will serve even more.



Madison, a Girl Scout, learned about vermicomposting and soil science during a Spark-Y open house. She later invited her entire troop to visit Spark-Y, where they attended a sustainability workshop.

Internship team leaders were given control (with oversight) of MAELC funds in individualized budgets for the specific projects they were in charge of -- an empowering experience for leaders, who completely designed the projects, calculated the budgets, and after review were given control over spending. Part of what we teach is independence and accountability: The ability that leaders had to completely control their projects, including budget, required them to be accountable. The experience that leaders gained through their projects is beneficial not only to them personally, but also to Spark-Y and the schools we serve, since intern leaders now have more ability to run our school programs. Indeed, two intern leaders who had previously assisted school programs are now leading them and succeeding.

MAELC funds made possible several incredible projects that make Spark-Y an important community resource, in the form of a one-of-a-kind, pioneering sustainability and agricultural education lab in South Minneapolis. We now have the ability to offer examples of Do-It-Yourself laboratory equipment, low energy input aquaponics systems (for farming various vegetative plants, herbs, and tilapia for food), mushroom cultivation chambers, large scale vermicomposting, Spirulina cultivation, and permaculture gardening for soil remediation. These projects were accomplished mostly by high school and college students, under the guidance of recently graduated youth who make up the Spark-Y team.

Revenue generating mechanisms have stemmed from at least one original intern project. The 24-square foot flow-through vermicomposting system has been completed and will launch sales in second quarter, 2014. As an organization that teaches sustainable agriculture – a concept that encompasses the environmental, social, and economic sides of agriculture – we feel that making our organization self-sustaining economically is vital. The involvement of students, interns and volunteers in this project means that we are actively demonstrating what we teach; students are learning economic sustainability by doing it. MAELC funds made the original vermicomposting project this summer possible. Inspired by this success, plans are also in place to increase sales and distribution of the aquaponics and mushrooms produce. Mushroom kits made possible by our mushroom cultivation system have been pre-sold for delivery in late first quarter, 2014.



Pollination Station in front of Spark-Y Offices



Spark-Y Interns and Staff

The help of MAELC funds has helped us launch a lab revamp that continues to expand. It will have a lasting impact on agricultural education in the Twin Cities for years to come and is currently impacting our annual school partnership programs and over 250 youth per year and growing! Thank you MAELC!

Zach Robinson
Executive Director
Spark-Y: Youth Action Labs
www.spark-y.org



University of Minnesota



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Don't Forget!
Priority Issue & Quality Program Grant Applications - Due April 15th
Common Fund Grant Applications - Due May 15th

Priority Issues Grant Projects		
Eden Valley Watkins High School	\$11,904	Food Chemistry
Farmanamerica	\$3,530	Teaching & Learning Technology for Agricultural Literacy
Kingsland High School	\$18,551	Food Chemistry
MN Association of Agricultural Educators	\$4,000	Chemistry in Food Science Teacher Training
Radio Disney	\$30,000	Agricultural Education Literacy School Assembly Programs
Spark Youth (Spark-Y)	\$14,855	Worms, Waste, & the Wall: The SHS & Spark-Y Active Sustainable Agriculture Project
St. Cloud Technical & Community College	\$8,957	FBM New Faculty Transition
Stillwater Area High School	\$7,500	Applied Chemistry through Food Science
Vermilion Community College	\$10,050	The Indoor Component of FOGG
Quality Program Grant Projects		
Morris Area High School	\$6,795	Agriculture Processing Class
Mountain Lake High School	\$2,345	Integrating Art & Science into Agricultural Education

This past fall, MAELC awarded over \$118,000 in grants to Minnesota high schools, FFA chapters, and community organizations that work to improve agricultural education in the state.

MAELC Awards \$118,000 in Grants