



**News Release – 10/31/22**

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## **Georgia Celebrates 15 National Champions at 95th National FFA Convention**

INDIANAPOLIS – The Georgia FFA Association’s success at the 95th National FFA Convention was highlighted by 15 national champions. Among Georgia’s national winners were the American Star in Agribusiness and American Star in Agriscience, five national proficiency award winners, three national Agriscience Fair award winners, and the nation’s Outstanding Middle School chapter. Erik Robinson, a member of the Effingham County FFA chapter, and a student at the University of Georgia, presided over the convention as the retiring 2021-2022 National FFA Southern Region Vice President. Robinson took a year of absence from UGA to serve the National FFA Organization.

Kaitlyn Hart, a member of the Colquitt County FFA chapter, was named the 2022 American Star in Agribusiness. Kaitlyn joined FFA as a sophomore and was quickly introduced to the world of horticulture and floral design. From the skills she learned in her agricultural education classes, Hart started her own floral design business. She creates arrangements for events and weddings across the state. A total of 4,306 FFA members from across the nation received the prestigious American FFA Degree in 2022. Among those recipients, the top four in the Agribusiness category were named finalists. Hart interviewed as a finalist and was named the national winner on stage during the 6th session of the convention. Hart is a graduate of Colquitt County High School in Moultrie, and her agricultural education teachers are Mr. Will Burt, Mrs. Morgan Gaines, Ms. Hannah Roberts, Mr. Michael Schwarz and Mrs. Adrienne Smith.

Marin Lonnee, a member of the Oconee County FFA chapter, was named the 2022 American Star in Agriscience. Lonnee started researching various topics focused on sustainability starting in the fourth grade. Since then, Lonnee has expanded her research into projects focusing on hydroponics, plant pathology, plant breeding and even structural development. Lonnee was chosen as one of the four finalists in the Agriscience category and after an in-depth interview process, was named the national winner on Friday of the convention. Lonnee is a graduate of Oconee County High School in Watkinsville, and her agricultural education teachers are Mrs. Chelsea Begnaud and Mr. John Collins.

Four Georgia chapters earned 1st place finishes in national Career/Leadership Development Events at the convention. Georgia CDE/LDE success was highlighted by Banks County (Forestry CDE and Agricultural Technology & Mechanical Systems CDE), Cambridge (Agricultural Communications CDE), and Irwin County (Chloe Paulk, Employment Skills LDE). Georgia’s other top-5 finishers in CDE/LDEs include Mossy Creek Middle (4<sup>th</sup> place – Conduct of Chapter Meeting LDE), Anna Grace Hunter of C.A. Gray Jr. High (3<sup>rd</sup> place – Creed Speaking LDE), and White County (4<sup>th</sup> place – Veterinary Science CDE.)

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One hundred and fifty-four Georgia FFA members received the prestigious American FFA Degree, the highest degree offered to an active member. These students spent years developing their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs to reach this honor. Less than 1% of FFA members receive the prestigious American FFA Degree. In addition to Kaitlyn Hart and Marin Lonnee, Madison County FFA member Cory Yarbrough was named a national finalist (top 4) for the American Star in Agricultural Placement award.

To see a complete list of Georgia's 2022 American FFA Degree recipients, visit [https://www.georgiaffa.org/docs/93316\\_GA%20-%20American%20Degree%20Recipients.pdf](https://www.georgiaffa.org/docs/93316_GA%20-%20American%20Degree%20Recipients.pdf).

The Franklin County Middle FFA chapter was named the nation's Outstanding Middle School chapter as part of the National Chapter Award program. Franklin County Middle was one of five national finalists for the award, including Bonaire Middle School, Carver Middle (Monroe, GA), Screven County Middle, and Youth Middle (Loganville, GA), all of Georgia. Each chapter had students make a presentation explaining their chapter's activities in the Growing Leaders, Building Communities, and Strengthening Agriculture portions of the FFA Program of Activities. The agricultural education teacher and FFA Advisor at Franklin County Middle is Mrs. Anna Watkins.

Logan Bennett of Colquitt County (Diversified Crop Production-Placement), Ellie Williams of Northwest Whitfield (Equine Science-Placement), Joan Tovar-Martinez of Sumter County (Grain Production), Devin Boyer of Franklin County (Nursery Operations), and Dallas Sills of White County (Swine Production-Entrepreneurship) were each named national FFA proficiency award winners for success in their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) programs. Only four students in the nation are named National Finalists in each of 45 proficiency areas. Georgia had 21 national proficiency award finalists and five proficiency winners.

Georgia FFA's three winners in the national Agriscience Fair included Carah Pulliam and Chloe Pulliam of Franklin County (Food Products and Processing – Division 6); Madeline Glaze and Aaliyah Turk of Youth Middle (Plant Systems – Division 2); and Katie Spivey and Fraser Knappek of Perry (Social Science – Division 4).

The National Chapter Award Program is designed to recognize FFA chapters that actively implement the mission and strategies of the organization. Georgia was represented well by four chapters who were chosen as finalists in this award program. Eastside FFA was named as a finalist (top 10) in the Premier Chapter – Growing Leaders division. Berrien County & Commerce chapters were named as finalists (top 10) in the Premier Chapter – Building Communities division. The Screven County chapter was a finalist (top 10) in the Models of Excellence division of the National Chapter Award program.

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Thirty-six Georgia chapters received a national 3-Star ranking, the highest ranking offered in the National Chapter Award program. Georgia's 3-Star chapters are Apalachee, Atkinson County, Berrien County, Bonaire Middle, Carver Middle, Central Middle, Clinch County, Commerce, Commerce Middle, Cook County Middle, Creekview, Denmark, Eastside, Etowah, Franklin County, Franklin County Middle, Haralson County, Islands, Jefferson City, LaFayette Middle, Loganville Middle, Newton College and Career Academy, Northside Middle, Oconee County, Oglethorpe County, Oglethorpe County Middle, Pataula Charter, Peach County, Pepperell, Pierce County Middle, Screven County, Screven County Middle, Summerville Middle, Treutlen County, Winder-Barrow, and Youth Middle.

Nine Georgians received the Honorary American FFA Degree for their outstanding contribution to Agricultural Education and the FFA. Georgia's recipients of the Honorary Degree included: Mr. Danny Bartlett, Mrs. Sabrina Davis, Dr. Ronnie Thomas, Mr. Todd Claxton, Representative Robert Dickey, Mrs. Christa Steinkamp, Mr. Andy Paul, and Dr. Eric Rubenstein. Also, Dr. James Woodard was presented with a VIP Citation which honors the dedication of individuals who contribute to the FFA mission of student success through their hard work and cooperation.

A complete set of results and a variety of highlights from the 95th National FFA Convention can be found at [https://www.georgiaffa.org/docs/sidemodules/17386\\_Georgia%20Results%20Summary%20-%20General%20-%202022.pdf](https://www.georgiaffa.org/docs/sidemodules/17386_Georgia%20Results%20Summary%20-%20General%20-%202022.pdf).

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