

Let's Talk

WYOMING FFA



Featuring a Wyoming FFA Leader

Remember Those Who Are Lifting You Up! ~ By Ron Rabou, Cheyenne

"This is freaking me out, Ron!" exclaimed Christy. In retrospect, driving blindly in the night as we inched along some random road in a classic western Wyoming blizzard was probably not the wisest choice we made. But then again, it was part of the adventure and we needed to persevere just a little longer. My fellow state officer, Christy Dicklich, and I were traveling the state presenting motivational assemblies to FFA chapters and their schools. In this case, we were headed from Afton down to Lyman, where Rex Hamner's chapter would be waiting for us the next day. We were determined to see the storm through...and we did.

This is just one of the many memories created along the way during my term as a Wyoming State FFA Officer. As a member of the overall state championship judging team, a state officer, national officer candidate, a member of the National FFA Made for Excellence team, and the past Executive Director of the Wyoming FFA Foundation, I was blessed with a very rewarding and fulfilling FFA career. It's one that provided me with an edge in business, in personal relationships, and in life.

As great as it may seem though, my FFA career didn't start out that way. The beginning of my FFA career was rather meek and uneventful. I remember as a freshman in high school, coming home to tell my parents I was quitting FFA. My mother said okay. My father said no. (Guess you know who won!) I don't even recall why I wanted to quit. I was incredibly shy at that age and suspect it was probably

due to my fear of being in front of others.

Because I wasn't allowed to quit, I had to get involved. And that's when things began to change. A countless number of nights, my father would go with me upstairs in our house, and as he lay on the bed in my room, he would have me practice the creed and my speeches in front of him. After I was finished, he would drill me with questions, one after the other. I hated it. And although those times were not my favorite, that was my humble beginning in FFA. After all this time, I finally recognize how this and every other step along the way was a building block that helped shape my life and my career as an adult.



If you're reading this, I don't need to tell you how important the FFA program is to personal growth and career success. Nearly everyone who has had even the slightest contact with FFA knows and understands its immense success in teaching students essential life skills. But what I think many do not fully understand is the program alone, does not instill these values, principles and skills. What makes FFA great is the people. In all of my travels during the past 20 years, I have yet to encounter an organization so full of solid mentors, creative teachers, engaged parents, open-minded students, and giving supporters. There is no organization in this world like FFA. And there is no stronger and supportive group of people than what FFA has attracted.

As I look back on my years in FFA, they were stamped

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Generating +
positive
 energy

to see awards presented, hear from keynote speaker Mark Nelsen and much, much more.

Wednesday is laced with public speaking events, a parliamentary procedure competition and younger FFA members

At the Civic Center Wednesday evening public speaking awards will be presented, FFA sponsors will be recognized and the FFA Foundation will be handing out college scholarships. Several special guests are expected

presentations, Wyoming FFA members will have the opportunity to meet their 2012-2013 Wyoming FFA Officer Team. No doubt excitement in the auditorium will be high on this early April morning!

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with tremendous personal growth, practical education and nationwide travel experiences. But, more than anything, those years provided me with the people who would impact my life and help mold me into who I am today. And they didn't do it just for me, they did it for everyone they encountered, because that's the kind of people they are. That's what FFA folks do. They believed in me, they encouraged me and they helped lift me to places I never thought possible. And I thought it would not only be appropriate, but necessary, that I take just a moment to mention who some of these folks are.

First and foremost, my father, always stood by my side. There was my teacher Bruce Nelson, whose sometimes abrasive approach, made me want to better myself. There were good friends like Justin Bailey and Christy Dicklich, whose friendship provided unforgettable memories. Griff Sprout and Howard Jones are still some of my best friends. Lizz Schilt took me under her wing and encouraged me during my college years. Jeff Lundberg encouraged my desire to stand strong for agriculture. Al Snyder inspired me and introduced me

to a whole new world of leadership. And, last, but certainly not least, Ron Pulse, has always provided me with countless hours of his time, has believed in me even when I didn't, and helped provide me with numerous opportunities that I would never have known otherwise.

Whether you are still in FFA or are a past member, you know who these people are in your life. As we enter another convention season, let us be mindful of who has helped to lift us up. Let's take a step back to gain some perspective on who has influenced us along the way. With all the excitement and busyness that surrounds convention, be sure to take a moment and let these people know they've made a difference. And as time passes, as I can assure you it will, always remember your humble beginnings. And remember that you have been given great responsibility. It's now *your* turn to take the initiative to be the one who lends an encouraging word, a helping hand and an open heart. The impact you make will be felt for a lifetime.

Thank you, Wyoming FFA, for the memories and thanks to all of you for continuing its legacy!

