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89th Missouri FFA Convention to be held in Columbia April 20-21

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo., April 3, 2017 – FFA members from across the state will meet in Columbia, April 20-21, at the 89th Missouri FFA Convention to honor fellow members for outstanding achievements, conduct association business, elect new officers and participate in leadership workshops.

Embrace Change, Respect Tradition is the theme for this year's annual convention, which is expected to attract more than 8,500 students and guests to Hearnes Center on the University of Missouri campus.

According to Missouri FFA Executive Secretary Keith Dietzschold, the state association will present State FFA Degrees to 761 members who, as a result of their agricultural and leadership achievements, have qualified for the state's highest FFA degree. Dietzschold also said Missouri has the largest number of American FFA Degree recipients of any state - 466 Missouri FFA members received the American FFA Degree in 2016 during the national convention held in Indianapolis, Indiana, in October.

During the state convention the State Star Farmer, the State Star in Agribusiness, the State Star in Placement and the State Star in Agriscience will be named. In addition, 635 FFA members will receive awards in 48 agricultural proficiency areas for development of their supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program. The proficiency areas are varied and include production, management, and communications disciplines. In Missouri, SAE programs during the 2015 - 2016 school year generated more than \$48 million in student income.

FFA members also will participate in a number of organization program areas including speaking competitions and career development events such as agricultural sales, floriculture, and livestock evaluation.

The Missouri FFA will present awards to several adults and groups for their support of agricultural education and FFA. This year 25 Honorary State FFA Degrees will be presented. An additional 16 honorary degrees will be presented to parents of the retiring state officers.

The Distinguished Service Citation will be presented to Ron Scheiderer, Salisbury. He recently retired from the University of Missouri where 2009-2016 he was professional development specialist for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. He served as Missouri FFA Public Speaking Academy coordinator 2003-2008. Scheiderer was agricultural instructor at Salisbury 1973-2003 and taught his first year in 1972 at Clark County.

During the convention Missouri FFA President Colton Spencer, Aurora FFA Chapter member, will lead 684 delegates in official business sessions. Each chapter is represented by two delegates.

Two FFA chapters will be chartered during the Thursday evening session. The new chapters are Kearney and Spokane.

National FFA Eastern Region Vice President Ashley Willits, a member of the Lowville, New York, FFA Chapter, will address FFA members and guests during the first general session Thursday afternoon. Willits' SAE experiences have been in diversified livestock production, agricultural processing and outdoor recreation. A junior at Tarleton State University, Stephenville, Texas, Willits is studying agricultural education and plans to become an agricultural education teacher.

Willits was elected as a national officer in October during national convention. The six-person national officer team collectively will log more than 100,000 miles representing FFA to top leaders in business, government and education. National officers also lead numerous personal growth and leadership training sessions, and promote agricultural literacy.

Also during first session, Missouri Director of Agriculture Chris Chinn will speak. Chinn, named to director in January, resides on her family farm in Shelby County with her husband and two children. The Chinns have a farrow-to-finish hog operation; a small cow-calf herd; raise corn, soybeans and alfalfa; and operate a family feed mill.

During the Thursday evening session, Missouri Commissioner of Education Margie Vandeven will share her passion about ensuring Missouri students are prepared for post-secondary success.

During the Friday evening final session Kyle Schelle, motivational youth speaker from Springfield, Missouri, will challenge attendees to "live better stories."

The Missouri FFA Association has 26,057 members, ranking sixth as a state in membership. FFA strives 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.