

# NYFEA UPDATE

March 2016



## Ag Promise 2016

Agricultural Leaders learn about Washington DC and How to make sure their Voices are Heard!

The weather was beautiful and the atmosphere for the meeting was exciting. Arriving at the Gaylord National the day after the CPAC meeting was held, the Ag Promise attendees found the facility to be filled with the energy of a national election. With the sun shining on the Potomac and the building buzzing with people, the first session was a broad-based discussion of the value of recruiting attendees for future activities in the association. Much of the dialogue centered around the opportunity to gather young people from the Colleges of Agriculture around the country.

The focus of the Monday component of the meeting was the opportunity to meet and discuss the agricultural issues. The group heard from the key leaders from the Washington area. Among the conversations was a presentation by Janet Adkison of RFDTV. She discussed the value of participating in the media dialogue. She shared important points about the dos and don'ts of media involvement. She offered insight into the current media environment in Washington.

The program also featured presentations from Riley Pagett, the top governmental affairs liaison for the National FFA. Riley spoke of the need to be a vocal advocate for agricultural education.

Addressing the organization was Sam Ridders of the United States Department of Agriculture. He is the administrator for the Rural Busi-

ness-Cooperatives Service. He spoke with the Ag Promise participants about the opportunities available for the American farmers through the department. He shared ideas for grant opportunities with the association members.

The group had the privilege of hearing from Matt Mika who is one of the Tyson corporations key lobbyists in Washington. Along with talking about important issues impacting the food and fiber industry, he discussed some of the challenges facing the industry of agriculture. He talked of the danger of over-the-top regulatory control.

The afternoon program featured a series of conversations. The first was a discussion with Chuck Conner of the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. He offered unique perspectives from a former Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture. Likewise, he shared ideas about working with the Congress. Additional conversations included discussions about "How to Advocate?" The presentation was made by the winners of the NYFEA Ag Communication Award program. Finally, the attendees worked in small groups to facilitate dialogue about key talking points on the most important issues facing agriculture. The small groups then graduated to an overall discussion that resulted in a final report featuring six talking-points. The Talking Points for Agriculture were placed on letterhead so they could be delivered to the offices of Congressional members on Tuesday.

Monday night, there was a reception in the Washington district. The reception was followed by a tour of the monuments.

On Tuesday, the attendees joined a speakers who talked about the House Agricultural Committee. They discussed the "way the process works." The presentation was held in the Agricultural Committee Room of the House of Representatives.

The highlight of Tuesday was the opportunity for the attendees to travel to Capitol Hill and meet with representatives and senators. Each person was encouraged to make appointments, visit the offices and share the Talking Points for Agriculture.

As the program progressed from Sunday through Tuesday, individual participants could be seen growing and developing in their understanding and confidence about America's federal government. While many people have the opportunity to observe the federal government from a distance, the great benefit of Ag Promise is that it allows attendees to have a personal appreciation of the process that makes America's government work.