

Wisconsin FFA Center

The Wisconsin FFA Center was developed in 1992 in response to the budget constraints of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction in agricultural education. With the decline in human, financial and time resources allocated to the FFA from the DPI, the agricultural instructors throughout the state decided to form a "Center" to insure the continual delivery of the FFA program to students. It all started with Wisconsin agricultural education instructors. They had the foresight and the vision of an office that could continue to provide programming and services for advisors and members. They developed the concept, figured out how to fund such an operation and their continued support allows the FFA Center to serve FFA members and advisors across the state.

Cheryl Zimmerman, State FFA Executive Director is the person operating the FFA Center on a daily basis and coordinating the programming for the Wisconsin FFA Association. Her responsibilities include supervising and training State FFA Officers to coordinating all state level FFA meetings and conferences including the State FFA Convention. She serves as a resource for FFA advisors and members, helps in processing State and National awards which local chapters submit, along with many other duties that come her way. She also represents Wisconsin through a variety of National FFA activities. Currently, Cheryl is serving on the National FFA Foundation Board of Trustees.

A Board of Directors made up of agricultural education instructors governs the Wisconsin FFA Center. Rick Bockhop, Cambridge High School agricultural education instructor is currently serving as the FFA Center Board Chairman. The Board also consists of the following members: Richard Aide, WAVAI Executive Director; Cal Geiger, WAVAI President; Jenifer Bos, WAVAI President-elect; Mark Zuber, agricultural education instructor Mondovi High School; Richard Meske, agricultural education instructor Black Hawk High School; Dave Laatsch, agricultural education instructor Beaver Dam High School; Tari Costello, agricultural education instructor Waupun High School; Mike Olson, agricultural education instructor Antigo High School.

The Wisconsin FFA Center is funded by two sources - each FFA chapter pays an annual Chapter Affiliation Fee of \$300.00 and \$2.00 of each member's dues goes to support the FFA Center's activities. Several FFA Alumni Affiliates assist local FFA chapters through paying this fee. The \$300 fee also includes an FFA chapter's registration to the State FFA Convention.

Ever since the FFA Center was developed, Wisconsin FFA programs and services have expanded. Because the Wisconsin FFA Executive Director gets the opportunity to work on a full-time basis for FFA, their focus is to develop, improve and promote Wisconsin FFA programs. In the last few years, FFA conference attendance has been increasing as more than 3,000 students attend leadership conferences in the state. These conferences include Made For Excellence, EDGE, Advanced Leadership Development, Greenhand Conferences, Half-Time Conference and Sectional Leadership Workshops. State FFA Convention has expanded to include more activities and educational events.

The Wisconsin FFA Center is based out of Spencer, Wisconsin. Through phone, fax, computers and the internet, Cheryl Zimmerman is able to communicate with teachers and members around the state and nation. The Wisconsin FFA Center works closely with the Department of Public Instruction and its agricultural education consultants. The Center also offers a Summer Intern program for college students planning a career in agricultural education. The FFA Center Board hired their first intern in 1996.

