



..... **STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH**
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Last week I commented on the Food Babe and others who go after the agricultural industry, or in the case last week my Girl Scout cookies, in one form or another. I know some people think I am a little paranoid and perhaps that I worry too much about these “little things”. The problem is that these little things can certainly become big things. I have always referred to this as the “pebble in the pond” affect. The ripples can be much bigger than the original splash. We have to be telling our story because if we don’t somebody else will and it most likely would not be the story we know or would tell.

I was honored and proud to serve as an FFA Advisor for 29 years and needless to say I took real exception to a post that hit Facebook and blogs across the internet this week. It came from PETA, so I guess you have to consider the source, but it just down right made my blood boil and shoot out of my eyes. The title of the hit piece was entitled “FFA Is Lame AF” The troubling part of this to me is that it was published by PETA 2, a branch of the organization geared toward teenagers. Here we have young people attacking other good young people who happen to want to be part of classes and a wonderful organization that promotes leadership and education in agriculture. What is ironic the individuals they attack are the very group of people who will clothe and feed them in the future. Have you heard the expression “Bite the hand that feeds you?”

This agriculturally ignorant person pretty much tried to stuff every talking point that animal rights extremists use into her tirade comparing her view with each segment of the FFA Code of Ethics. The real Code can be found at: <https://www.ffa.org/about/who-we-are/mission-motto> along with the FFA Motto and FFA Mission. I will have to admit that it took all I had not to respond on Facebook and erupt towards this idiot that dares denigrate the Blue and Gold and the fine young people who belong to it. To go after our youth like this is over the top and trumps Food Babe’s diatribe on cookies!

I have to say that I was proud of the restraint shown by the hundreds of thousands of young people, parents and grandparents that instead told positive stories of their association with FFA. I hope that this hit piece got buried under the avalanche of good stories that were told with the passion that these young people have for this organization and what it does and what it stands for. I cannot fathom that the young lady (if real) says she was in FFA. “When I was a kid, I joined Future Farmers of America (FFA) because the organization sounded like a bomb club to join if you’re into animals, leadership, and agriculture. But I soon discovered that joining FFA meant agreeing to a very hypocritical code of ethics.” She then goes on point by point ending with a plea: “Are you an FFA or 4-H member with a “beef” with the organization? Quit! Go vegan, and join the PETA2 Street Team to make a REAL positive difference in the lives of others!” - I feel the urge to purge!

If you really want to see how she equates the FFA Code of Ethics with animal rights and cruelty to animals go to: <http://www.peta2.com/blog/ffa-future-farmers-of-america/> . But more importantly I suggest instead to read some of the FFA positive blogs that have hit the net over the last three days. They do an amazing job of highlighting where this young misguided and misinformed activist got it wrong. Here are just a few that you can look at if you have access to the internet: <http://celestelaurent.com/the-truth-about-ffa-and-agriculture-education/>; and <https://brilliantlybold.wordpress.com/> and for a unique take on it: <http://www.uptownsheep.com/uptown-girl--a-working-farm-wifes-blog> Instead of this old ag teacher expressing his views, why not listen to the young people who will one day run this world? I could not be as eloquent or persuasive as these individuals in addressing this issue. They give credence to the fact that FFA is more than just agriculture education, showing livestock, or competing in Career Development Events or Leadership Contests – although that is very important. FFA and agricultural education also focuses on science-based learning, teaches public speaking/advocacy skills, leadership training, provides business training, and even encourages public service. These are things that make them an important and vital component of each high school that offer the program. It does my heart good to see more and more schools offer these classes and the resulting FFA organization to their students and to the benefit of their community.

Posts like these pro-FFA blogs, in response to this attack on an organization that is near and dear to them, describe the passion and dedication that these FFA’s young leaders have to not only grow future generations of agriculture, but also to leave the world a much better place, something PETA has failed to do in its quest to take down anyone who eats meat or is involved in animal agriculture. I believe that we all absolutely must continue to support groups such as 4-H and FFA. It is imperative that we encourage our nation’s youths to join these groups and build excitement for joining such an incredible industry which is dedicated to feeding the world and its ever-expanding population. It is our job as agriculturalists to combat the agricultural illiteracy present in today's society by advocating for this amazing industry and organizations.

I am in my twilight years and am highly motivated by the thought that there will be a changing of the guard and these young people have and will take on the yoke of enlightening people like the writer of this vitriol post on how our youth organizations like FFA and 4-H are critically important to their own development but to the future of our world. I wore, with pride, my FFA jacket as a youth and realize that it was over 50 years ago that I first put it on. I still have that jacket and the memories that it provided me. I owe my career and what I am today to this organization and will always hold dear the words of the FFA Creed – which I can still recite. In reading negative blogs like the one described – I am glad I do!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer, which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or Nebraska Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, Nebraska Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email: dlienemann2@unl.edu or on the web at: <http://extension.unl.edu/statewide/webster>