

Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture
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COMMISSIONER LEONHARDT TO PRESENT AWARD TO STUDENT AG INNOVATION WINNER

Charleston, W.Va. – On Friday, November 17th, Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt will award \$500 to the winner of the West Virginia Agriculture Student Innovation Challenge. The six finalists were chosen during a competition held at Eastern Community and Technical College Thursday, November 2nd. The finals will be held at the Marshall Memorial Student Center. This is the first year for the event.

“Innovations in agriculture are changing the way we think about farming. West Virginia has an opportunity to inspire the next generation of scientist and farmers that will change the way we eat,” said Commissioner Leonhardt. “Events like this are vital to our state’s and country’s future.”

As part of the competition held on November 2nd, students in grades 7 through 12 were challenged to develop creative strategies to address pressing issues and problems facing agriculture. Each team submitted an application which was scored by a panel of judges from across the state. The top applications were then notified and the teams were asked to develop a pitch for their innovation. Twenty-six teams presented to a panel of judges who then selected winners from six categories.

Six finalists:

- Plants Systems - Hayden Kestner - Sherrard Middle School (**Ohio County**)
- Animal Systems - Ryan Anderson and Johnny Slattman - South Harrison High School (**Harrison County**)
- Environmental and Natural Resources – Ivy Ward, Catie Walton, Cole Anderegg and Nathaniel Bailey - Buckhannon-Upshur High School (**Upshur County**)
- Power, Structural and Technical – Levi Hamrick and Colby Grose - Clay County High School (**Clay County**)
- Food Products and Processing – Clarissa Keiffer - Clay County High School (**Clay County**)
- Agribusiness Systems – Abigail Schoonover, Leighvi Cummings and Shayna Bennett - Clay County High School (**Clay County**)

The West Virginia Agriculture Innovation Challenge was created by the West Virginia Agricultural Catalyst team which includes: Eastern WV Community & Technical College, the Robert C Byrd Institute, the WV Department of Education and the WV Department of Agriculture.