

Office of the Commissioner of Agriculture  
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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **NATIONAL FFA WEEK CELEBRATED FEB. 18-25**

**Charleston, W.Va.** – It's National FFA Week February 18-25. More than 4,600 young adults participate in the program across West Virginia. From raising a hog to building a business plan, FFA teaches life skills that members use whether they work on a farm or Wall Street.

To celebrate National FFA Week, Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt and Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture Joe Hatton plan to tour Buffalo High School's aquaponics lab and greenhouses on Wednesday, Feb. 22. Also on the agenda, an FFA business plan presentation and a reception.

The media is invited to attend. The event gets underway at 12:15 p.m. in the auditorium of Buffalo High School located at 3680 Buffalo Rd., Buffalo, WV 25033.

Sixty-eight high schools and ten middle schools in West Virginia sponsor FFA chapters. The West Virginia Department of Education employs 101 agriculture education teachers. The program prepares students for more than 230 careers in the sciences, business and technology of agriculture, food and resources.

"FFA is essential to our state's comeback story. We have a growing workforce gap in agriculture and lack young people to fill the void," said Commissioner Leonhardt. "Our FFA chapters and educators do a tremendous job preparing students for future careers. They should be thanked and celebrated around the state this week."

The history of FFA in West Virginia dates all the way back to November of 1928. The first meeting of the West Virginia Future Farmers of America took place at West Virginia University. The group elected officers and set out objectives for the club including sending products to local fairs and conducting at least one project each year to improve agriculture in the community.

"Many of our agriculture leaders are folks who participated in FFA and their knowledge and skills were enhanced through the programs offered in FFA," said WVDA Deputy Commissioner Joe Hatton. "FFA provided the opportunity to learn about agriculture sciences, see American agriculture and develop leadership skills."

Throughout the years, FFA added new programs and goals but the main focus remains the same, provide leadership and career development experiences for the youth of West Virginia.

Deputy Commissioner Hatton joined FFA growing up in Gilmer County. "FFA was an important part of my youth. Not only was it fun, it taught me skills I've used throughout my career such as hard work, persistence and the importance of following through."

For more information about National FFA Week and the commissioner's visit to Buffalo High School, contact WVDA Communications Director Crescent Gallagher at [cgallagher@wvda.us](mailto:cgallagher@wvda.us) or 304-558-3708.

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