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**“ADVISOR TRIBUTE” SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS CHOSEN**

***Students receive scholarships for FFA summer leadership retreats***

BATH (May 27, 2025) - Agriculture education teachers/FFA advisors make a world of difference for the students they teach. This spring, **students put into words the impact their ag teachers/FFA advisors have had on them** as part of an FFA Advisor Tribute Scholarship application. Seventeen students will receive a scholarship to attend a SD FFA Leadership Retreat this summer based on the powerful stories they shared about the impact their teachers have had on their lives.

**Leonard DeBoer Memorial (2)**

Bradyn Small, Langford Area and McKayla Dow, Tri-Valley

**Walt Johnson Memorial (11)**

Andrew Pruitt, Belle Fourche; Rachel Brown, Bridgewater-Emery; Allyson Couser, Brookings; Hailey Stimson, Brookings; AJ Otten, Canton;Jacoby Costello, Garretson; Matthew Smith, Gregory County; Braylon Plucker, Lennox-Sundstrom; Sutton Plucker, Lennox-Sundstrom; Ellie Storm, Sturgis; and Macee McGregor, Webster

**Jason and Ashley Frerichs (2)**

Megan Wiese, Milbank and Kelsey Fischer, Webster

**Rhonda Wosje (2)**

Ava Benson, Brookings and Gillda Larson, Lake Preston

The selected students are not afraid to share the admirable characteristics of their advisors and how they have placed a lasting impact on them and their fellow classmates. The excerpts from the student essays below illustrate their bright future because of their ag teacher/FFA advisors.

* **Andrew Pruitt, Belle Fourche** senior shares, “Mr. Austin Bishop’s deep understanding of everything blue and gold inspires me. He encouraged me to start an Agriculture Business Management team which altered my future, as I intend to go to college for Ag Business.”
* **AJ Otten, Canton** junior comments, “At district officer training, I learned about servant leadership. My advisor, Ms. Aime Carter, is the best example of a servant leader. I'm inspired by her to not only be a better leader, but a better person.”
* **Gillda Larson, Lake Preston**, junior shares, “Mrs. Karley Hall goes far beyond teaching lessons, she encourages us to grow as individuals, take on challenges, and become leaders in our community. She helped me gain confidence in public speaking and decision-making. She reminds me that hard work and integrity matter.”
* **Bradyn Small, Langford Area** senior reflects, “When I joined FFA, I was in a rough spot; Ms. AnnaMarie Sachs stood with me, making me feel like I belonged. To her, FFA isn’t just about ag education or contests. It’s the development of others with and for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success. .”
* **Ellie Storm, Sturgis** senior says, “Mr. Stran Holben has shown me what hard work is and helped my find my interests. He pushed me to do the uncomfortable tasks, be accountable, and use these to better myself and the chapter. Through his teaching, I have become a confident leader, and fully enjoy my experience.”
* **Rachel Brown, Bridgewater-Emery** junior, says, “Mr. Alex Toupal is constantly encouraging others to do their best and try something new. He creates opportunities, motivates us to lead, and builds a strong sense of community. His passion for agricultural education and leadership development is inspiring.”
* **Hailey Stimson, Brookings** junior recognizes strengths in both her advisors, “Mr. Joshua Johnson and Mrs. Michelle Dykstra honor agriculture and are willing to help anyone curious to learn about it. Since I don't live on a farm or acreage, I was very intimidated. They were kind and welcomed me, pushing me to strive, take on challenging tasks, and be my best.” **Ava Benson, Brookings** sophomore, says “When I was doubting my abilities and fearful of letting down my chapter, Mr. Johnson stayed positive. I strive to be a person who can have a positive impact on others like he has on me.” **Allyson Couser, Brookings** sophomore adds, “Mr. Johnson taught me to appreciate agriculture, to work with a team as well as individually, and the importance of losing as well as winning.”
* **Jacoby Costello, Garretson** junior comments, “Ms. Alysha Kientopf helped me out of my shell with public speaking. She encouraged me out of my bubble with ag broadcasting and now I can stand in front of a whole gym of people and not get nervous.”
* **Matthew Smith, Gregory County** senior reflects, “Ms. Mollie Andrews has made me more confident speaking in front of crowds and taught me to be myself no matter the situation. She pushes me outside my comfort zone and makes me try new things that I think I won’t like, but after she pushes me to do it, I realize how much I do like it.”
* **Braylon Plucker, Lennox-Sundstrom** sophomore, says, “Mrs. Kasey Trouke is excited to explore new ideas, take on challenges, and help us grow as students and leaders. Through her guidance, I’ve learned new ways to communicate with others, to step out of my comfort zone, and developed important leadership skills. =Her hands-on teaching style help us connect with what we’re learning in ways that stick with us.” **Sutton Plucker, Lennox-Sundstrom** freshman adds,“Mrs. Trouke keeps us focused and pushes us to perform to the best of our abilities. She reminds us to be role models and leaders, helping shape us into driven individuals.”
* **Megan Wiese, Milbank** senior comments, “My advisor, Ms. Sara Colombe, puts her students before herself. I remember going back and forth on whether to apply for district office. She made sure I knew that if I didn’t get elected, it would not make me any less of a person. Districts rolled around, and I was a nervous wreck. She stood by me until I went into my interview and was there when I got out. When my name was called, she was the loudest person in those bleachers.”
* **McKayla Dow, Tri-Valley** sophomore says, “I have never met anyone as dedicated and focused on making their students succeed in life as Mr. Tanner Peterson. FFA has pushed me out of my shell, to try things I never thought I could do, and not give up. He showed me that no matter where you are from or where you are at, you are always welcome in FFA.”
* **Kelsey Fischer, Webster** junior says, “Mr. Fred Zenk believes in me. He doesn't just teach agriculture, he teaches leadership and responsibility, pushing us to grow out of our comfort zones, and to do more than we think we are capable of. Whether preparing for contests or working on our SAE's, he shows up with purpose.” **Macee McGregor, Webster** sophomore adds, “Mr. Zenk is passionate about agriculture and dedicated to helping students become the best version of themselves. His love for range shines through when helping students’ study and practice plant lines. His charismatic wit keeps everyone on their toes and guarantees learning is fun and exciting.”

Scholarships are made possible through the SD FFA Foundation by Rhonda Wosje, Jason and Ashley Frerichs, and the Walt Johnson Memorial Fund; in memory of two past FFA advisors: Leonard DeBoer and Walt Johnson. Both men led by example and their advice was truly ripened with wisdom. Mr. DeBoer spent his life teaching young people about agriculture and the leadership skills that would make them successful in their career choice. He was the FFA advisor in Chamberlain for almost 40 years where he lived FFA's mission by making a difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for *premier leadership*, *personal growth* and *career success* through agricultural education. Mr. Johnson served as the SD FFA Foundation President, as well as on the SD FFA Foundation board, in Newell as an ag teacher, supporter and coach for FFA career development events. He was devoted to agriculture education and earned his Honorary American FFA Degree in 2007.

For more information about the South Dakota FFA Foundation and South Dakota's FFA programs, visit [www.sdffafoundation.org](http://www.sdffafoundation.org/).

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