

Kowalewski spreads word about importance of feeding world

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
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Advocate for Agriculture

Morgan Kowalewski has had little rest since the first week of April.

While winding down the school year and graduating from Gothenburg High School in May, the 18-year-old has juggled school, a job and training as an FFA state officer.

“It’s been constant,” she said during a break from conferences and travel recently.

Kowalewski was selected by a nominating committee as vice president of the Nebraska organization during FFA state convention last April.

Of utmost importance, she said, is showing business owners and others the importance of FFA and ag education.

“The whole state’s economy depends on agriculture,” she said. “And with baby boomers retiring, leadership in agriculture is crucial for the younger generation.”

FFA and ag education also teaches students how to be effective leaders who make important decisions in Nebraska, the United States and the world to improve agriculture.

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She noted that 9 billion people will need to be fed by 2050.

“Ag needs to be supported by everyone including the lawmakers who make the bills that support or harm the ag industry,” Kowalewski said.

Gothenburg students, as well as those across the country, can influence ag, whether they’re voting to elect a representative or are directly involved in agriculture, she said.

More people are becoming distanced from agriculture, Kowalewski said, yet everyone still has to eat.

“They have a connection to agriculture and it’s important they understand that,” she said.

In addition to advocating for agriculture to the business community and students, Kowalewski and her state officer team also support FFA chapters around the state.

“We meet with chapter leaders and connect with members and put on different workshops,” she explained.

Each state FFA team throughout the nation has a focus area and Nebraska’s goal is to have 7,000 non-collegiate members by state convention in the spring of 2014. Membership is at 6,600.

Kowalewski said FFA is the largest student-led organization in the world, noting that 4-H is the largest student organization.

“It’s so cool to be part of this and an opportunity to influence people and students in reaching their goals and watching them grow as individuals and leaders,” she said. “I feel like I’ve

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changed too.”

So far, the most challenging part of Kowalewski’s position has been balancing time between family and FFA.

“It’s been hard to choose because everything is so important,” she said.

Fortunately her employers at Eastside Animal Center, where she works as a kennel assistant, have allowed Kowalewski time away to travel, she said.

So far, the highlight of her state officer reign was COLT (Chapter Officer Leadership Training) where she and other officers facilitated the convention for FFA chapter leaders.

On Aug. 26, she’ll begin her freshman year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as an animal science major and continue her state officer duties. Kowalewski hopes to become a veterinarian.

During second semester, she’ll visit FFA chapters around the Lincoln area.

Kowalewski will step down as state officer during the state FFA convention in the spring of 2014.

She said she appreciates the community support she’s received.

Brennan Costello, a 2011 graduate of GHS, served as Nebraska FFA president in 2011-12 and is currently a national officer, serving as central region vice president.

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