

2015-2016 RECIPIENTS



OLIVIA WISE-DENT

From Janell McMullan, ag science teacher at James Madison High School:

"It has been a great pleasure to work one-on-one with Olivia Wise-Dent as her agriculture science teacher and FFA advisor. She is a highly motivated young woman who has the will, dedication and desire to succeed in every task she takes part in. Olivia is a leader and a very important part of the Madison FFA chapter and our school.

"As a Star Chapter Farmer in Madison FFA, she has taken every possible opportunity to participate in all aspects of the FFA, including leadership development, career development, community service and agricultural awareness activities. Olivia also serves as our FFA chapter's vice president. Olivia has put on leadership camps and helped organized chapter banquet.

"Olivia can attribute her leadership skills to her attendance at leadership development activities such as district and area chapter conducting, as well as district, area and state agriculture issues forum. Olivia has also been a part of a successful career development event, the third in state veterinary science career development event (CDE) in 2014, and the state and national reserve champion for the veterinary science CDE Team in 2015.

"Olivia has also taken an active approach in the science fair, participating at the San Antonio Livestock Show, Texas FFA Agriscience Fair, National FFA Science Fair, State Fair of Texas Science Fair, Alamo Regional Science Fair and Houston Livestock Show Science Fair. Olivia excelled at every science fair she participated in, and she placed first at five of the events and second at nationals.

"Olivia also takes time to volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, the local wildlife refuge and other service-related activities. Olivia's balance of time and work is a true miracle in itself. She always seems to be at everything on time. Additionally, she is a member of the National Honor Society and serves as the chairman of the community service committee.

"It has been a great pleasure to have Olivia in my classes and a part of the Madison FFA chapter, and there is no doubt she is leaving her legacy."

From Olivia:

"I am very excited and honored to be receiving this award. Agriculture is a passion of mine, and I am very excited to see what the rest of my high school tenure has to offer. I would encourage any and all students involved in FFA or 4H to reach out and explore what your school and organization has to offer. Reach for the stars and your highest rewards will follow. Hard work pays off."

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JADEYN ARTHUR

From Katy Harkey, ag science teacher at Ralls High School:

"Jadeyn is a junior at Ralls High School, where she serves as a Ralls FFA student advisor, student body treasurer and member of National Honor Society. She was voted as the sophomore "Class Favorite" in 2015. Jadeyn also enjoys playing on the Ralls Lady Rabbits varsity softball team as their first baseman, and she was recently named All-District First Team Infielder.

"Jadeyn is a devoted member of the Ralls First United Methodist Church, serving as their Sunday liturgist. She was also selected as the 2015 Ralls Miss Cotton Boll Queen. Jadeyn was raised on her family's cotton farm, bringing agriculture awareness to her community involvements.

"She was recently elected as the District FFA Treasurer for Area 1. Winning a second-place San Antonio Agriculture Mechanics award for showmanship last year was a proud accomplishment for Jadeyn and our school. Jadeyn is currently serving as a Texas State 4-H Equine Ambassador. The equine ambassador program strives to give young leaders the opportunity to develop and practice advanced leadership skills related to mentoring other youth, as well as teaching them to become advocates for Texas' equine industry. Only 20 high school students within the state of Texas are selected to represent the horse industry.

"Jadeyn attended the first-ever Vet Science Camp at Texas A&M University this past summer, where she was able to see some of the state's finest vets in action. While at this camp, she also became certified as a Texas Beef Quality Producer. Her experiences in

vet science helped her win first place in state with her 4-H record book this summer. As a result of this win, she will be attending the Texas 4-H Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., in November.

"Additionally, Jadeyn volunteers at the Texas Tech Therapeutic Riding Center as a side walker. She teaches horse safety at the local horse club, and she helped local Boy Scouts earn their horsemanship badge. She taught rabbit showmanship at the 'Kids, Kows, and More' community agriculture awareness event, which is hosted for hundreds of elementary schoolchildren. Her peers were also served by Jadeyn, as she spoke at the County Teen Summit seminar concerning daily teen issues."

From Jadeyn:

"I am excited and honored to receive the GROW award. I am grateful to everyone who has helped me get to where I am and to the Texas Department of Agriculture for choosing me for this award. I look forward to building a career in agriculture and continuing to strive for success."



KELTON AND KOLBY MAREK

From Keitha St. Clair, principal of Blanco Middle School:

"Kelton and Kolby Marek are twins, and as such, it is difficult to separate the two. They have so much in common and work hand-in-hand on almost all projects. Both are very active at school, their church and in the community. They have taken part in numerous community service projects, including volunteering many hours to assist with the 2015 Blanco River flood clean-up efforts.

Additionally, Kelton and Kolby have volunteered to do yard work for elderly community members, donated silent auction items for fundraisers and assisted with the local Wild Game Dinner Youth Fundraiser. They also assisted with the Blanco County Youth Council clean-up and set-up, decorated the town square for the Lights Spectacular display, designed and decorated a Veteran's Day float for the local parade, and assisted with the Blanco County Gardenscape Fun Day. The boys also frequently volunteer for Parents Night Out at the local Lutheran Church. I am most impressed that both boys continue to volunteer for things like this on a yearly basis.

Both boys are very involved at school, including as members of the National Junior Honor Society and Student Council. Both are valuable members of the Panthers football and basketball teams. The boys are on the A or A/B honor roll every six weeks and have both been recognized as UIL District Champions for individual and team events.

Kelton is the Student Council vice-president. He also finished in the top five for two years at the San Antonio Livestock Exposition Public Speaking Contest. Kolby was recently awarded the "Spurs' Camper of the Week" for his work ethic at summer training camp. He has also won the Panther

Spirit Award at Blanco Middle School several times.

Kelton and Kolby are active in raising and showing livestock, and manage a small cattle herd of their own. They also exhibit steers and pigs at local, county, prospect and major livestock shows. As part of the Junior FFA program, they participate in numerous livestock judging contests and attend numerous district, area and state conventions and camps.

The boys were highlighted in feature articles in the Ft. Worth Star Telegram for overcoming adversity in their lives and in the Austin American-Statesman for efforts in helping with the 2015 Blanco River flood clean up. These two young men truly deserve recognition for their character, their volunteerism, their school leadership and their outstanding work ethic. It is my honor to nominate both of them for this prestigious award."

From Kelton: "I am very appreciative to win this huge award. It is such an honor."

From Kolby: "This is a huge surprise. I am very excited and grateful."



CASEY NEUMAN

From Jessica Graham, agriculture science teacher and FFA advisor at Onalaska Junior-Senior High School:

"The GROW award recognizes students who demonstrate excellence in all pursuits, both inside the classroom and out, as well as in academic and extracurricular areas. Community and family service, a strong work ethic, leadership, and positive morals, values and character are all important for this honorable recognition. It is such a tremendous honor to recommend Mr. Casey Neuman as a prime candidate for GROW award. I feel Casey exemplifies the areas highlighted by this award.

As an agriculture science teacher and FFA advisor, many students pass through my doors. Casey distinguished himself as one committed to the cause since the very first day he walked through the Onalaska Junior-Senior High School Agriculture Science Department four years ago. It is because of his active involvement with FFA, school and the community that I can attest to his character, service, positive leadership skills and strong work ethic. I have had the pleasure of watching Casey develop his leadership and communication skills through FFA. I have also watched him delegate, listen to, organize and support others, all of which are characteristics of a great leader.

Casey has been an influential member of multiple leadership and career development teams in FFA. He has served for three consecutive years as an FFA officer and currently holds the elected responsibility of Sam Houston District FFA President in the Area IX FFA Association. I have witnessed firsthand the amount of hard work and purpose Casey puts into each day in order to accomplish his goals.

Casey is involved in numerous school organizations such as the National Honor Society and as an O.I.S.D. Strategic Planning Committee Student Member. He also participates in a variety of community service activities. Casey is well aware that an important aspect of life is continual self-growth, constant learning and lending a hand to others.

Over the course of these years, I have witnessed him generously and unselfishly help his peers, teachers and community, and volunteer for numerous charitable efforts. His work ethic, community and family values, honesty, integrity and perseverance are second to none. I am very proud of the young man Casey has become. He is an outstanding, deserving young man, and I truly believe you will find no other candidate as worthy as he for this prestigious honor."

From Casey:

"I have heard it said many times that success often comes to those who are not even looking for it, and I see now just how true that is. I wake up every morning with a simple 'game-plan' in my head: Do what is right and fair always, make the choices that will benefit my future and that of others, and give God the glory for everything. These three simple points of emphasis have led me to where I am today. Being honored with the GROW award has proved to me that you do not have to look for success to find it; you just have to be prepared when opportunity finds you."



SHELBY SALGE

From Leslie Stanton Dohnalik, agriculture science teacher at Travis High School:

"Shelby is extremely outgoing and her busy schedule reflects that. Not only is she currently serving as the vice president of our FFA Chapter, she also raised a goat for our county fair in the fall and is raising broilers for Houston Livestock Show in the spring. Shelby is a member of the Travis High School Band and Girl Scouts. She teaches swim lessons several days a week, and attends Bible study and barrel races.

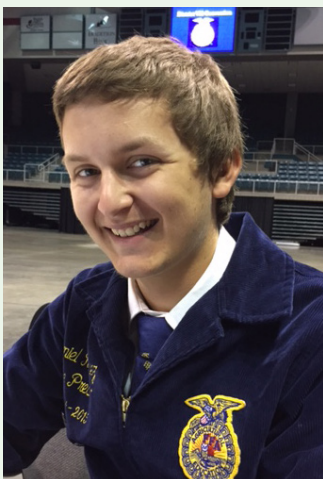
I first met Shelby two years ago when she was a freshman in my speech class. She was soft spoken until it came to time to present, and she always wanted her speech topics to be about horses. I knew she would be perfect in FFA, and that summer, Shelby decided to raise her first animal. Watching the amount of dedication she has poured into her livestock projects while also managing her time between all of her extracurricular activities, I always knew Shelby would do great things in our program. Shelby joined the Poultry Judging Team that went all the way to place eighth at the state contest. She decided she wanted to devote more time in FFA and run for office, and she ultimately made the tough decision to quit softball after years of playing to give her all to FFA.

I am so proud of how she balances her schoolwork from her AP classes to band practice. Something beautiful about Shelby is that she always finds a way to give of herself. Whether it's to meticulously cut out objects for my signs in the hallway, show another student how to better show their goat, take care of other students' chickens like they are her own, greet all of our brand new FFA members at meetings or give of her time at any service event, Shelby is a constant — and that is a precious thing when running an organization.

After observing Shelby inside and outside the classroom, she has one quality that is rare among most people — she sees all people the same. Shelby will treat you with the same kindness no matter how different you are, and watching her be so kind to others is a great reminder to me daily. I think the GROW award perfectly describes Shelby's character."

From Shelby:

"I am honored to accept the GROW award from the Texas Department of Agriculture, and I am grateful for my ag teacher, Mrs. Dohnalik, who made that possible. Mrs. Dohnalik is not only the reason I joined FFA, she is also one of my biggest inspirations. Getting involved in FFA has led me to develop a better understanding of all aspects of the agriculture industry, as well as provided me with leadership skills that will continue to benefit me later on down the road in life. With the help of my friends, family and ag teachers, I will strive to further my involvement in agriculture throughout my community. It is such an important part of each person's everyday life, and getting to experience that firsthand only greater instills the importance of it in my heart and mind."



DANIEL RODRIGUEZ

From Casey Wilson, agriculture science teacher at El Campo High School:

"Daniel is a very driven young man with a passion to succeed at everything he does. He has a competitive drive that helps him motivate his peers and fellow chapter officers to strive for the best. Daniel currently serves as the president of the Morton Ranch FFA chapter. He previously served as the chapter vice president, as well as an important part of the Maverick Band and member of the principal's round table. Daniel also is a life scout.

He is an outstanding leader in the FFA organization, and many students look up to him as a mentor and role model. From extracurricular commitments to community service activities, Daniel manages his time well and is a very outstanding young man. Daniel has found an immense passion in the ag mech shop. He is a mentor to many with ag mechanics projects.

Additionally, Daniel raises market hogs and chickens at the local and county level. Daniel never hesitates to help a fellow FFA member, no matter what the task. When he was a member of the wildlife team, Daniel helped the team immensely, as he taught his teammates ways to learn the contest and offered assistance in how to identify species. Once a member of the poultry team, Daniel quickly found his way towards the top and was always striving for excellence. As the lead member of the skills team, he constantly offers his teammates help, so the entire team can be the best possible.

Daniel always has others' interests at heart. Daniel truly is a well-rounded, diligent, dedicated and charismatic young man. He is the epitome of hard work and dedication, and he understands exactly what it takes to be successful. There is not a young man more deserving of this award."

From Daniel:

"In honor of receiving the GROW award, I would like to thank everyone who helped get me to where I am today. Through thick and thin, I've always had my family and an ag teacher by my side. Three of my teachers in particular have always been behind me pushing me for greatness and success, including Mrs. Wilson. She was there when my dad passed away, led me to state in Poultry Judging and constantly pushed me to do my best. Finally, I'd like to thank my family and my lord and savior. Dad, we lost you too soon, but you instilled values into me and taught me to lead with unwavering character."



KAYLA BOETTCHER

From Anna Bayer, counselor at Lexington High School:

"Kayla is an amazing student, the kind you see come through school once every few years. Academically, she is at the top of her class, but that is not due to lack of involvement outside of school. She always takes the most challenging curriculum available and is continually raising her expectations for herself.

Kayla is involved in athletics as a member of the cross country, track and tennis teams, as well as keeping stats for the football and baseball teams. She demonstrates team spirit in support of other groups as well. This year, she decorated locker rooms, stayed up to make goody bags for teams and painted the football field in support of pediatric cancer awareness. Her willingness to help others is admirable and sets a great example for others.

Additionally, Kayla is an active member of the FFA. She has demonstrated pride and dedication to her show animals. Her hard work is often rewarded with awards and recognition from shows across the state. Through her involvement in stock shows, she has demonstrated her amazing work ethic. She has embraced the responsibility of raising animals and does not let that hold her back in other endeavors.

Being such an outgoing and successful student in high school can sometimes lead to a feeling of entitlement, but that is not the case for Kayla. She always has a kind word for others and is willing to lend a helping hand. Her kindness towards others is apparent to all who have the pleasure of having her in class. Even as a freshman, Kayla has become a leader others seek out on campus.

As you can see, Kayla is an exceptional student who has managed to balance and excel in school, extracurricular activities, church and community. To see a student so involved and excelling as a freshman is exciting, and I am anxious to see what great things she will do throughout high school. She is truly an amazing student."

From Kayla:

"I would like to thank the Texas Department of Agriculture for awarding me this honor. I feel very blessed to receive this award and will continue to do my best in every aspect of my life. I would also like to thank my counselor, Mrs. Bayer, for nominating me for this award. Her confidence in me makes me want to work hard and be a positive example to others. I don't think people understand how important agriculture is to our lives and how it affects every single one of us. Being personally involved in agriculture on a daily basis makes this award even more special."



NADIA DAVILA

From Jennifer Morris, agricultural science teacher and FFA advisor:

"Nadia is never without a positive and willing attitude. She will jump into whatever her teachers throw her way and is more than willing to help others in whatever ways she can.

Nadia has 21 college hours under her belt and has balanced her academics with numerous extracurricular and community service activities. She is a Student Council member, National Honor Society member and secretary and has participated in numerous 4-H activities. Nadia is always striving to improve upon her leadership skills and has attended camps such as Camp RYLA and received the Rotary Youth Leadership Award.

Nadia is also a member of her local FFA chapter. She has held the office of secretary and currently is Colorado FFA's president. Additionally, Nadia participates in leadership teams, wool judging and floriculture judging. Nadia has earned both her Greenhand and Chapter FFA Degrees and is now working to complete her Lone Star FFA Degree.

Nadia has shown sheep and goats for the past ten years. She has had two grand champion and two reserve champion goats as well as six showmanship wins at county competitions. Her greatest show accomplishment came when she had a division winner at the San Antonio Livestock Show two years ago and won a \$10,000 scholarship for her efforts.

Nadia is always willing to show her fellow FFA members some of her skills to help them with their animals and successes in the show ring. She is an exemplary candidate for the Texas Department of Agriculture's GROW Achievement Award."

From Nadia:

"I am very honored and blessed to receive this award and hope that I can continue to work hard to serve and make my community proud. I wanted to get involved in many different activities so I have had to learn how to manage my time to continue participating in as much as I have. There have been a lot of obstacles to overcome when it comes to making my own decisions and setting my priorities so as not to follow the crowd, growing up so to speak. I have learned so much from having to make choices for what is most important and will help me be successful in my career."