



BRAD PFAFF
STATE SENATOR

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Celebrating National FFA Week

Growing up on my family's farm in northern La Crosse County, I learned the value of work. Farming is what my family did morning, noon, and night. It filled our days. I milked the cows before I went to school and after I got home.

At school, I became a member of Future Farmers of America (FFA). There, I learned how to lead.

February 17th-24th is National FFA Week; a week-long celebration of FFA programs and the impact they have on students across Wisconsin and our country.

FFA was instrumental in developing my knowledge of agriculture, conservation, and economics. It taught me to challenge myself and helped me grow into the person I am today.

For Wisconsin agriculture, growing our workforce starts not just on the farm, but also in our schools and organizations like FFA.

Our next generation of agriculture workers and leaders are in FFA chapters right now, learning and growing as people. Whether FFA members go on to work in production agriculture or choose another path, their experience in the program is valuable and the skills they develop will serve them in any field.

As a state, we need to support FFA programs and ensure students have these opportunities to learn and grow as leaders.

The field of agriculture and our farming practices are constantly evolving. Sixteen and twenty four row corn planters have largely replaced the old four and six row planter. The majority of our state's hay crop is no longer harvested with "kicker" balers.

As technology changes and new generations begin to farm, FFA programs and hands-on learning for students will help Wisconsin continue to lead in dairy, genetics, vegetable growing, and food processing.

The memories students make in FFA last a lifetime. I still have fond memories of my time in FFA and the experiences that made me who I am.

When I was at Melrose-Mindoro High School, I attended State and National FFA conventions, and participated in the dairy judging competition at World Dairy Expo. Mr. Jim Brady, my FFA instructor, encouraged me to step forward and speak with confidence; he held me responsible. The lessons in leadership I gained from FFA have helped me ever since, whether it was serving as the Secretary-designee of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection or in my current role as the Ranking Democratic Member on the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Tourism.

Throughout my career I have asked the question: how can we better connect the dots between people who live in rural, agricultural communities, and those who live in cities and suburbs that have no idea what agriculture is all about?

There's no one-size-fits-all solution, but one way to connect them is FFA. Programs like this can bridge the gap between rural and urban, giving opportunities to all students to participate in Wisconsin's agricultural heritage.

Thank you to all of the parents, volunteers, advisors, and students who make FFA an enriching environment for learning and fellowship in our state. Happy National FFA Week!

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Senator Brad Pfaff represents the 32nd Senate District, which includes La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford, and southern Monroe County.