



Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association Presents

Here, by the Owl



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MATA TAKES ON LAS VEGAS

JILL SMITH, MATA STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Each year the National Association of Agricultural Educators hosts a national conference that rotates through a few different fun and fast paced cities. This year, the NAAE Conference was held in the fabulous Las Vegas, Nevada. For my first NAAE Conference, I couldn't have imagined a more beautiful place to cultivate relationships, learn more about who I am as a teacher, and take in all of the information I could.

For a lot of us Maryland attendees, we flew in on Monday or Tuesday and began our experience with the National Council for Agriculture Education Summit. Teachers from across the country collaborated on various topics giving light to how they currently fit in the agriculture teacher's journey, and posing ideas to the council on how they can direct support appropriately to the needs of our teachers and students. Topics included National Quality Program Standards, Adult Education and Postsecondary Education Programs, Pathways and Standards Revisions, Alternative Licensure and Lateral Entry Education, and SAE for All. Teachers stated their concerns with programs, strict barriers COVID-19 has left for them, concerns with recruiting and retaining agriculture teachers, and how these topics fit in their classrooms, all the while coming up with recommendations for the council. Recommendations included better streamlining of data, training the trainees, using practical and in person tools, and creation of more programs like Teacher's Turn the Key for alternative certification holders, broadening perspectives of certain standards and capitalizing on the lifelong experiences of our retired agriculture teachers to mentor and retain new ones. It was surely one of the most brilliant and passionate conversations I have ever been part of.

I was able to step out of the student role and into the teaching role through various workshops on my new favorite topic, agriculture mechanics. I even walked away with a few good lessons on electrical practices and small gas engines; all to add to my collaborative document. I was inspired to create this document showcasing all of the great lessons, advice, and tips on

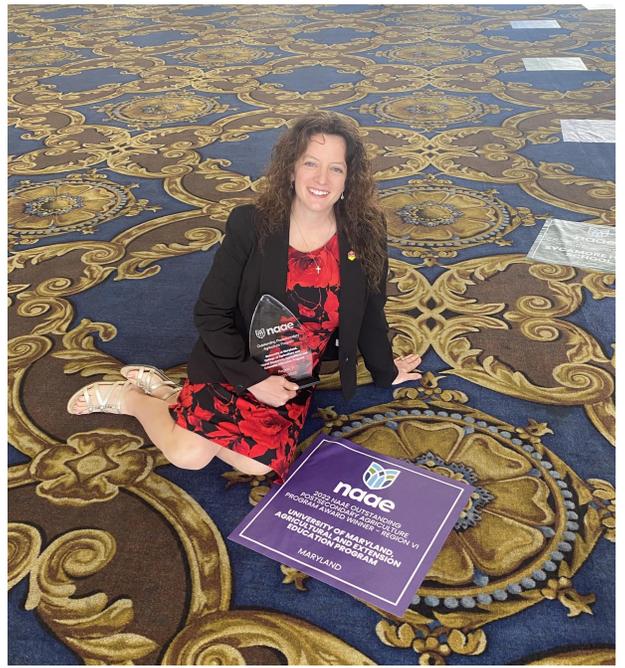
how to be a well rounded agriculture teacher I have collected over the years.

Regional meetings were a place to catch up with old friends, collaborate with new, thank our NAAE partners, honor our award recipients, and talk about an in person regional meeting for the upcoming year. Watching our very own Region 6 Vice President Robin McLean run for President Elect was also an inspirational experience. I hope she knows how proud we are of her for her dedication over the years to always work hard and represent her fellow agriculture teachers well. Our very own Aaron Geiman was also unanimously elected to serve as our Region 6 Vice President, and our most sincere congratulations goes out to him. I know he will do great things during his term. UMD's Dr. Welsh was also awarded this past week with her work in building up the University of Maryland Agriculture Education program, a program I am honored to be part of. She even got her very own placeholder on the NAAE walk of fame! Awards and accomplishments were shared all around as MATA Board Member Dr. Stacy Eckles experienced a week of professional development and tailored experiences to guide her as an agriculture teacher. Our state even walked away with the NAAE Professional State Association Award.

In our down time we spent time exploring the city of Las Vegas together, fellowshiping over great meals and conversation and finding new places to experience with each other. I don't think I have ever had a better experience at a learning conference than I have since being part of the Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association. I have been so immersed into what it means to be an agriculture teacher and have cultivated some of the best professional and personal relationships because of our organization. I'd like to thank those who have given me the opportunity to experience what I have thus far, and extend a huge thank you to our board members the past two years who have believed in me, and invested in me as a preservice teacher. Programs like ours are how we retain great agriculture teachers and it's no secret that our University of Maryland program is on its way to doing just that and that. Our Maryland agriculture teachers are clearly dedicated to investing in themselves to invest in their students' futures.



A night out on the town with MATA and friends!



Dr. Melissa Welsh poses with her "Walk of Fame" floor spot.



Student Representative Jill Smith with Dr. Welsh as the University of Maryland received their award.



Back Row L to R: Joe Linthicum, Sarah Shriner, Dr. Stacy Eckles, Aaron Geiman
Front Row L to R: Deanna Thies, Robin McLean, Caroll Shry, Terrie Shank, Jill Smith, Dr. Melissa Welsh, Stanley Sturlock

NAAE RECAP

Attendees

- Terri Shank
- Dr. Stacy Eckles
- Sarah Shriner
- Jill Smith
- Joe Linthicum
- Dr. Melissa Welsh
- Aaron Geiman
- Caroll Shry

Region VI Vice President

Aaron Geiman

Teacher Turn the Key

Dr. Stacy Eckles

Voting Delegates

- Sarah Shriner
- Dr. Stacy Eckles

Professional State Award

Maryland

Region VI Outstanding Post Secondary Agriculture Program

University of Maryland
Dr. Melissa Welsh



SARAH'S SCOOP

A Letter from the President

Sarah Shriner

Happy holidays! I am just back from the National Association of Agricultural Educators

convention in Las Vegas, Nevada and feel **renewed as a teacher**. All of us teachers, no matter the stage in our career, can get stuck in a rut. That's where I was when I boarded the plane to the convention. All I could think about was that I'd be gone at midterm, I had so much grading to do, my son turned 7 at the end of the week, and I just didn't feel like writing substitute plans.

I boarded the plane at 6:00am and was running on about 2 hours of sleep so I couldn't wait to fall asleep on the plane. I was tired, grumpy, stressed, and hoping not to be noticed. However, my boisterous and enthusiastic neighbor was super chatty. I learned that she was originally from a rural area in Nebraska and had 40 students in her graduating class. When she got to high school at 14, she got a school driver's permit because they didn't have school busing. She had been in FFA and her boyfriend's children were in FFA in Texas. She lives in Nashville and owns her own company, but sings country music on the side. Check her out here: <https://candycountry.com/>. I learned so much from a conversation with a random stranger on the plane and am thankful that I left my comfort zone to **adjust my mindset** and for a powerful professional development experience full of **connections** from all over the nation.

This was my third NAAE convention in my teaching career, and all of them were in Las Vegas. The first time was when I worked for the [Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation](#) (MAEF), and the second time was to present as a National Agriscience Teacher Ambassador (NATAA). This time I was in attendance as a voting member for MATA. We only had 2 votes this year because we had 33 members last year. So far we have surpassed that with 37 active members. Have you joined yet? Help us have more of a voice by joining today. **We could have 1 or 2 more votes from our state** if more of the over 80 agriculture teachers joined our association.

The sessions and **professional development** were fantastic! How many of you struggle with hands-on recruitment ideas? I attended a workshop on [Interactive \(and cheap!\) swag](#) for recruitment tables. Students that take home a tiny terrarium, slime, or a painted rock from your booth will not forget your program! Want to impress your administration and community? [AET](#) has new reports that you can use to show your engagement in the program, community, and financial impact of the program. I know that I am not utilizing AET to its fullest extent and am excited to work on that this year. Are you looking for an opportunity to gain

educational and inquiry based resources for your classroom? Consider [applying to NATAA](#) this year when applications open in February. I went to the National Agriscience Teacher Ambassador Annual Symposium after a 12 year hiatus. We learned about a new lab where students can test for Nitrates and Phosphates in various sites leading up to a reservoir, to determine where the pollution is coming from. It was an excellent example of an inquiry lesson that Joe Linthicum and I are looking forward to teaching to you this summer at the Maryland Agricultural Educators Conference. Want to learn more? Ask one of the 6 NATAA participants from the past. The ambassadors include Diane Herndon, Bridget Hoffman, Joe Linthicum, Amy Poffenberger, Sarah Shriner, and Greg Stull. The last ambassador was in 2015, so we would love to have another Marylander join our ranks!

One of my favorite parts of this convention was reconnecting with people from my past. I got to see professors I knew, people I had classes with, teachers I had taught with, and I met [Dr. Park](#), the new National FFA Advisor who is also a professor at NCSU. I also got to have dinner with and eat with a past agriculture teacher who works for the [Native American Agriculture Fund](#) (NAAF) in writing curriculum and working with grant programs. I had never even heard of NAAF, but learned so much native american history in that one conversation. There are 3 state recognized tribes in Maryland and there is grant money available to support these people with the NAAF.

On the plane ride back I got to sit with Joe Linthicum on one side and talk to him about all of my ideas for the state and my program. While we talked, we engaged in a short conversation with the person sitting at the window seat. He is an engineer from a county in Maryland that did not have an agriculture program when he was in school. The conversation was much different than my experience going out to convention. Had I not just been refreshed in my love for educating people about agriculture, his negative comments may have pulled me down. Instead I let him talk and gave him some things to think about. We all know this, but as more people are removed from agriculture, our jobs just keep getting more important. **We are ag teachers in the classroom, but also outside of the classroom.**

I titled this article "What's in it for Me?" because I hear that a lot from teachers. They want to know why they should join their professional organization. Well I have highlighted some reasons in this article already but I ask you this: "What do you want?". Also, "What do you tell your students when they are reluctant to join FFA?" I joined MATA and NAAE because of the \$100,000 liability insurance that comes with dues. I am still a member because of the professional development opportunities and connections that I make. We all hope that nothing happens in the

class, but what if it does? NAAE outlines additional [benefits](#) on their website.

I want us to grow and offer more to our members, but I can't do that without your voice. Join MATA and NAAE by visiting the [website](#). Tell us what you want to see us do on our [survey](#). We've only had 16 responses and need more to help improve. Join us and then apply for NAAE awards. Let's build the community of agriculture teachers so we can support one another.

Want to get involved? Our next MATA board meeting is Wednesday 1/4/23. We will meet in a hybrid format for the first time in a while. Be at Catoctin High School at 6:00pm if you would like to eat dinner together. Promptly at 6:30 the business meeting will begin and you can join from home via the following google meet link: <https://meet.google.com/vxp-ymwp-kgq>. Maybe you'll be in Phoenix for the 2023 NAAE Convention. I hope to see you soon!

Warmest Regards,

Sarah Shriner
MATA President

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE



Want to be part of our organization? Membership forms are available online at mata-md.org.

Mail completed forms to:

Roy S. Walls, Jr., MATA Treasurer

9104 49th Avenue, College Park, MD 20740

Questions? Contact Membership Chair Kelly Bryant –
kbryant@ccboe.com



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

A LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY

Melissa Leiden Welsh, Ph.D., CFCS, CPFFE

At this time of the year, it is common to see an increase in the desire to help friends and family. Often it can be challenging for some to be on the receiving side of this equation as many educators are quite independent. Sometimes it can be a hidden control reflex as tasks may be completed slightly differently than how we would like to see them done. However, this presents an awesome opportunity for shared leadership for our youth to assist in turning these challenges into valuable learning experiences or mentoring opportunities for community members. Inviting volunteers and community members into the classroom may seem daunting for educators if not staged through clear expectations on both sides. Students enrolled in AGST 640, Analysis of Maryland Agriculture, or AGST 440 Exploring Maryland Ag, Ag Literacy and Ag Industry are introduced to numerous agricultural stakeholders in the state. Within these courses, students select an entity to explore or examine more intensely through a practicum experience. These 3 credit courses are open for any interested individual to complete as a non-degree seeking graduate student or through the various undergraduate enrollment options at UMD. Students engage with the speakers and organizations throughout the semester and then share their learning with their peers and myself during their experience discussions and presentations. It is rewarding to hear about continued collaborations or student's recognition of the network among our agricultural education community. There is always room for improvement and sharing perceptions can help strengthen our community. Please consider this your invitation to share your teaching experience and professional wisdom with the UMD students. My undergraduates and graduate students also come from diverse backgrounds and may provide a pipeline connection for your students investigating post-secondary schooling. Likewise, I'd like to connect you and your students to my network. I welcome inquiry emails (Drmwelsh@umd.edu) to make connections happen. I wish you all the very best for this Christmas season and joy for the New Year. You are amazing at what you do!



STATE OFFICER SOUNDOFF

The Great Turkey Pardon

Teagan Flaherty, State Secretary

This year, our team was very lucky to have the opportunity to be invited to the Turkey Pardoning Ceremony at the White House, alongside State Officers from Virginia and Pennsylvania, and even our National President and Secretary. The team at National FFA provides great opportunities such as the Speak Ag Pioneer Program which represented half of us attending, including myself. We were front and center on the White House Lawn to watch Chocolate and Chips, this year's turkeys be pardoned by President Joe Biden. There were many opportunities to speak to other guests, discuss the importance of agriculture. President Biden even mentioned FFA and agriculture education in his speech. We also scored a selfie with the National FFA Officers present; a truly once in a lifetime opportunity!



Want to see a Maryland FFA State Officer at your next chapter event or in classroom experience? Fill out the State Officer Request form [here](#).



NATIONAL FFA SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT



The National FFA Scholarship application closes on Thursday, Jan. 12. No applications will be accepted after this time. This scholarship page is the only website that you can use to apply.

To apply, please ensure you have the following:

- Your FFA member ID that is linked to your active membership and the linked FFA.org email address. You must use an email account that you will have access to beyond high school. **DO NOT** use your high school email address. This could prevent you from receiving award notifications.
- Need help finding your FFA member ID? Click [here](#).
- A copy of your academic transcripts to upload in the system.
- Accurate FAFSA information — only if applying for scholarships based on financial need.

Please note: The National FFA Center will be closed Dec. 23, 2022 – Jan. 2, 2023. However, our scholarship vendor, ISTS, will still be assisting students during this time.



CUP OF JOE

Maryland FFA Alumni

Joe Linthicum, President

Greetings one and all,

Wow, how time has flown. The school year is nearing the halfway point and the holidays are quickly upon us. So far this year we have been to the Big "E" for the first time in several years, and the National FFA Convention where our student members fared very well in the competition. I have to mention that our State Alumni Association also was recognized at the National Convention in several areas with a shout out to the Southern FFA Alumni as a top 3 finisher in our region. Our State FFA Officers have logged a lot of miles and events including Regional Leadership Conferences in 4 of the 5 regions all in the same week, as well as witnessing the Pardoning of the Turkey on the White House Lawn. I applaud their efforts, along with that of Mrs. Shank as they continue to strive to meet the needs of our FFA chapters and members. Several of us just returned from the NAAE convention in Las Vegas where there was plenty of professional development. A huge congratulations to Aaron Geiman on being elected Vice President for Region 6, and to Dr. Stacy Eckles as she was the Maryland representative in the Turn the Key program. Dr. Missy Welsh and the University of Maryland was also recognized with the Region 6 outstanding cooperation award.

That brings me to point out some thoughts that I have been pondering for some time. For elections of national interest, Maryland only has 2 votes while many of our neighboring states have several more. Why you may ask? It is based on membership numbers. Maryland has 33 members which entitles us to 2 votes. Surely there are more than 50 agriculture educators in our fair state. So, let me pose a question or two to you. How do you feel about the teachers union you may or may not belong to? Non-members reap the same salaries that are negotiated for members of the union. If your chapter is an affiliated one, do you get total participation from all of the agriculture students in your classroom? Now granted, all of these memberships do not demand that you participate, but think how much better they would be

if all would. Currently there is a committee made up of MATA members and a few others who are working to promote a possible way to develop partnership within the Maryland Blueprint for Education. They started in September and have continued through the months of October and November. Now, we hope that the work this committee has done so far will help our agriculture education programs in the future, but we are not just waiting for the ball to drop to tell us how we will operate in the future. My point is that all agriculture programs will benefit from this effort if it is accepted; all or partial. To use two quotes from the past: "United we stand, divided we fall," and to paraphrase JFK, "Ask not what your organization can do for you, but ask what you can do for your organization".

I'd like to close with some words of wisdom that I came across in some of my readings. Right now, even as we speak, Santa and his helpers are making toys up at the North Pole. Early in the twentieth century, a group of explorers went in search of Santa, and on April 6, 1909, the first human being reached the North Pole. That man was Matthew Hensen, an African-American and Admiral Peary's personal assistant. He later received a Congressional Medal of Honor for this achievement. Here's what he had to say:

"Only man can get a vision and an inspiration that will lift him above the level of himself and send him forth against opposition... to do and to dare to accomplish wonderful and great things for the world and for humanity."

Both Santa Claus and Matthew Hensen have done wonderful and great things for the world. Today, ask yourself what great and wonderful things you want to accomplish for humanity, then hold that vision!

As an old owl, I am still giving a hoot. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, or honor the holiday of your choice.

Joe Linthicum

MATA TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

This edition's Teacher Spotlight shines on Thomas Mazzone, an agriculture educator who is now in his tenth year of teaching. Before becoming a teacher, Tom received his Associate in Arts degree from Carroll Community College in 2010.

He then moved onto the University of Maryland to receive his Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture Science and Technology & Secondary Science Education in 2013. Finally, Tom recently received his Master's Degree in Agriculture Education and Communication from the University of Florida in 2021.



Tom began his teaching career as a student teacher at Linganore High School in 2013 as a senior in college. Right after graduation he accepted a position in the small town of Hancock, Maryland where he established a flourishing program during his five years there. After leaving Hancock High School in 2018 Tom moved just down the road to Clear Spring High School and stayed there until 2021. He then returned to the University of Maryland in 2021 as a lecturer. Now working for the Institute of Applied Agriculture, Tom teaches four classes; Fundamentals of Agriculture Mechanics, Power Machinery, Landscape Construction, and Agricultural Drones.

Some of Tom's greatest memories as an agriculture teacher include taking students to Oklahoma for the National Land Judging competition, carrying out the pavilion, meat smoker, beef, and hog projects with his Clear Spring students, chartering the 90th FFA Chapter in the state of Maryland at Hancock Middle Senior High School, winning the NAAE national outstanding early career teacher award in 2020, and attending the Briggs and Stratton workshop in Wisconsin.

Tom has been a member of the MATA since 2013, even serving as the Reporter from 2017-2021. Since then he has met countless individuals who have notably impacted his life, even from before his time as an agriculture educator. Tom says these people have left a notable impact on his life:

"My Ag teachers and FFA advisors Dick Weaver, Mark Smith, and Aaron Geiman at North Carroll High School. These guys pulled me into FFA late in my high school career, but with just enough time to make an everlasting impression on me. They were high energy, innovative, and professional, and I can't thank them enough for

bringing me aboard and showing me everything a quality Ag program should be.

Pat Beachy and Tom Hawthorne. Being placed at Linganore High School for student teaching was a blessing. Pat and Tom are true assets to the profession, and they took it upon themselves to show me the ropes of what it takes to run a top tier program. Their endless dedication to Linganore's Ag program shines in so many ways, and I will always look up to them for inspiration and support.

Roy Walls. Roy is one of the most genuine individuals I've ever met, and he immensely set me up for career success at both the high school level and university. Our brains work much the same, so he is always a great resource to bounce ideas off of and ultimately generate new ideas. He relentlessly showed me through his teaching how important student relationships are in the education process, and it's something I strive to form with all of my students.

My late Uncle Calvin Kelly. Uncle Calvin was an early adopter of satellite driven agronomic data, long before it became trendy. I'll never forget him showing me soil conditions of green bean fields all over Carroll County from a palm pilot at his kitchen table in the 90's. This was seemingly unheard of at the time, and it was him that truly fascinated me with agriculture. He would flip if he could see the plant data I'm pulling from a drone today.

My parents and grandparents. They have cheered me on and supported me every step of this wild, taxing career as an ag teacher, and I cannot thank them enough.

Lastly, my past and current students. From the bottom of my heart, I love you all. I wish each and everyone of you nothing but the best of success!"

When he isn't in the classroom, Tom enjoys woodworking, tinkering with old engines, country music concerts, and collecting pocket knives.

Are you interested in nominating a Maryland Agricultural Educator for the MATA Teacher Spotlight?
Email richard.stonebraker@fcps.org



BLUEPRINT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Aaron Geiman, Committee Chair

The MATA appointed committee, and its consultants, have met nearly weekly, since September. The committee has developed a proposal for the leadership of Agricultural Education in Maryland, that we hope will be appealing to the Blueprint CTE Committee (the decision and funding body). We await meeting with the CTE committee to gain a sense of their appeal for the proposal. The proposal includes creating an office of Agricultural Education for Maryland, that will be staffed by Agricultural Education professionals/leaders and support staff, to administer the full three-ringed Agricultural Education model. In addition, the proposal calls for elevated funding for the office and its staff, for program expansion across Maryland, and for elevated support to existing programs (local schools, FFA, etc...). The committee will also seek support/endorsement of this proposal from various Agriculture Education Related Organization groups in Maryland, in the coming weeks/months.



MATA MEETING SCHEDULE



Join us for our remaining meetings in 2023!

1/4/2023

* This meeting date will be held in hybrid format. We will meet in person at Catoctin High School at 6:00, with the meeting set to begin at 6:30. *

2/1/2023

3/1/2023

4/5/2023

5/3/2023

6/7/2023

7/5/2023

The link is the same each month (meet.google.com/vxp-ymwp-kgq) and is posted on the website at mata-md.org.

AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

Sarah Shriner, Catoctin High School



Meet Sarah Shriner, your 2022 NAAE Outstanding Teacher in Maryland Award Winner! Sarah has just begun a new leaf in her teaching career as she is now an agriculture educator at Catoctin High School. Before teaching she received her Bachelor's of Science in Animal Science and Agricultural Education from North Carolina State University, as well as her Masters of Agriculture Education. She is now in her 17th year of teaching as she spent 2 years in North Carolina, 1 year at Frederick High and 13 at Middletown High.

Sarah has had a lot of great experiences over the years but says her most unique one was the opportunity to attend the World Food Prize in Iowa for the Youth Institute. She says, "I was able to see so many of our young and creative hunger problem solvers from all over the world. My highlight of the event was seeing the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo speak in person." While being new to Catoctin, there is a lot for Sarah to experience including their annual butcher day which she says is one of the coolest things about this FFA chapter.

When Sarah was asked to elaborate on her teaching journey and the connection it has to the award, this is what she had to say. "I am a National Board Certified teacher in Career and Technical Education - Natural Resources. This program has made me an extremely reflective teacher and I absolutely encourage anyone who is thinking about doing it, to go for it if you have the time. I am also a National Agriscience Teacher Ambassador and use inquiry in lessons to build curiosity, interest, relevance, and rigor in agriculture. I teach the 3 circle model of Agricultural Education in the classroom. I utilize the Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET) for SAE and work with many programs in the FFA chapter. I highly encourage community engagement and invite guest speakers and take field trips when possible. I have also been piloting the iCEV certifications in my courses and successfully certified 18 students last year."

Sarah's award is for members who are conducting the highest quality agricultural education programs. The award recognizes leadership in civic, community, agriculture/agribusiness and professional activities. Outstanding agricultural educators are innovators and catalysts for student success in agricultural education.

Be rewarded for your hard work within your program! Apply to win a MATA or NAAE award this year! Details to follow.