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Issue Four
July 2020

Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association

From *The* Nest



Summer Professional Development

Summer break for Ag teachers consists of creamsicle pops, long days on the beach or by the Bay, hanging with our kids, feeding the animals, watering the plants, and of course Professional Development! Follow the link below to hop on some virtual PD opportunities. Be sure to connect with the MATA Officers if you know of any others that should be included on the link!

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1aDtyaBPmkm_ZE5vVEr8dIvx7ahTkA_0jxlARwCmLpr4/edit?usp=sharing

A Letter From The President

Tom Hawthorne

Wow, what a difference a few months makes. We were just getting to know our new spring students, filling up greenhouses, and looking forward to our ever so busy spring with sales, CDE's, banquets, and convention. Your MATA board was getting really excited about planning a great meeting at spring judging and a super Region 6 conference in Washington County. We ag teachers went from wondering as we always do about how we can get everything done to sitting at home pondering what are we going to do next. All the unknowns were frustrating, but we made the necessary adjustments in order to make distance learning work. We went from the 3-ring model to the 3 phases for reopening. The one thing for certain was our hair got longer. So hopefully the excellent conference which was planned for this year will occur in Washington County next year. Our conference this year will be a virtual one consisting of a business meeting, awards, and election of new officers. It will be held July 8, 2020 from 10:00 am until noon. I hope you will join us. I am so proud to have served as your president for the 4th time. It is an opportunity not a chore and being an active member has been such a benefit to my career. I thank all those who encouraged me to serve and I highly recommend it for every ag teacher.

Thank you,
Tom Hawthorne



Classroom >>>

Virtual Learning: Bringing it home

We have experienced a major change as educators, students, and lifelong learners in the recent months of 2020. As classes were pushed online and school buildings became vacant the surrounding communities learned the vital role of a classroom setting as we, the educators, learned the role we play for our students.

Frederick High: Richard Stonebraker

Students of Frederick High are living their best virtual life under the instruction of Britt Sentelle and Richard Stonebraker. This dynamic duo has managed to find a little bit of light in some trying times. Mr. Stonebraker took to social media to share some of the unique and creative activities he and his students have been up to over the last few months. On May 12th his students were preparing to embark on a series of field trips that could never have been completed face to face in such a short period of time! Richard shared “This weeks online learning for my students is incorporating my two passions.... horticulture AND history! We are taking virtual tours of historic gardens around the country (Mt. Vernon this week, Monticello next week, and The Biltmore after that). Online learning has its drawbacks and I miss my students-but I am excited to be able to do something I wouldn't be able to do otherwise!”



Conference

Maryland Agriculture Educators statewide look forward to a weeks' worth of professional development, tours, networking, and tools to bring back to their home classrooms. Unfortunately, the excitement of an in-person conference will need to be postponed until next year's conference. This year we will be joining the MATA Officer team on July 8th for the final business session of the conference to recognize outstanding members and supporters, handle any unfinished business from the previous year, and elect the new officer team. Be sure to keep an eye on your email for the link to join the virtual meeting! Get excited! You deserve the recognition and reconnection during this business meeting!

FFA >>>

Drop the Gavel...On YouTube?

Yes YouTube! Sticking to the ever so common theme of TAKING IT ALL ONLINE, Maryland FFA will be hosting their convention virtually too. The current state officer team has taken this all-in stride as they have continued to engage members and prime them for what to expect during these virtual sessions.

Leading up to the announcement, the State officers have been highly active on their social media accounts through a variety of engagements with members. In March State officers linked up with MAEF to participate in Ag literacy week. April gave us the opportunity to get an intimate look at each officer's journey to becoming who they are today through a social media take over! As if this wasn't already cool enough, we then had the opportunity to see chapters statewide participate in a series of Chapter



all week long! By May members engaged in a TikTok challenge of #passthejacket where we saw members “pass” an FFA jacket from member to member across the entire state of Maryland. State officer candidate interviews were even hosted virtually! As humanity faced a different pace of life that required social distance, the current team showed us how to have fun and stay connected throughout it all! Tune into the Maryland FFA YouTube channel or Facebook page to revisit this year's convention full of brilliant retiring addresses, recognitions, member achievements, and so more! I know you won't want to miss any moment of this historical convention!

A Note From The Editor

We cannot direct the wind, but we can adjust our sails. Thinking back to a turbulent year that has led us to unimaginable possibilities.

A comment that has me laugh out loud every time I have seen or heard it is “My biggest useless purchase this year was a 2020 planner.” Thanks #COVID. I know at least two things about any person who has made this comment. One, they are not a teacher. Two, they are definitely not a student advisor, especially not an FFA Advisor. If I’ve learned anything during my experience as the editor of the MATA “From the Nest” Newsletter is that all Agriculture Teachers and Agriculture Education Stakeholders never SLOW DOWN, even in the midst of a pandemic. If anything, they have kicked it into overdrive as they rearranged lessons, made personal calls to their students, gotten creative with their FFA meetings, congratulated their beloved seniors from afar, supported their green houses on school property, picked up ALL the student barn shifts, worked with alumni to reform the normal banquets and fundraisers and without a doubt lost more sleep than usual and did I mention that most of them were juggling a full time home life in addition to all of this.

For most educators we know the inside scoop of virtual teaching and learning ... now that is. In the beginning though we said no matter what we will figure it out for the sake of our students because they deserve a degree of normalcy in times of uncertainty... as we ran through our house, internally screaming. I want to say how inspiring it was to see all of us step out of the comfort of our classroom and grow in the light of the crisis. I saw Instagram and Facebook posts from many of you and I have shared phone calls and texts with several more! Those of you that connect with me on

Snapchat always manage to bring a smile to my face with your students’ notorious antics even from their homes at 12:30am when you had just opened the weeks assignment 29 minutes before that. I have to say my favorite fly on the wall moment by far was seeing my High School Ag Teacher Mr. Chris Davis attempting to get his animal science students excited about types of injections.

We can probably envision what our normal lesson may look like in a classroom. We probably pass out some oranges or have a cookie sheet full of jellied string beans and begrudgingly pass out a needle of some kind just to get our points across, literally. Well Chris, like most of us, didn’t have the ability to do that this semester. With it being a hit or miss of his students were actually tuning into his google meets he was obviously looking for ways to keep his students entertained and engaged. Lucky enough for me my sister is one of his students. Now that I am home until further notice I have the pleasure of hearing Mr. Davis every Thursday morning. It’s almost like I am back in my sophomore year of high school, struggling to keep my eyes open first thing in the morning, all over again. I never thought that would happen.

This one particular morning I was pouring milk into a bowl of cereal and suddenly missed the bowl when I heard him exclaim out of nowhere “Gotta be extra careful with these wild bananas! They can be vicious, you might wanna put a muzzle on ‘em, they like to bite. You might have to pin them down because they are THAT strong!”



My sister instantly erupted with laughter and spun around on the couch so fast I thought she was going to fall over. She shouted at me “WHY ARE YOU ALL LIKE THAT!?!?” as the giggles continued. I looked at her confused and asked like what? She then proclaimed that “All Ag Teachers are absolutely insane!” To that comment I had to laugh, because... well... she’s right. I catch myself jumping up on the counters of the classroom to make a point. I think back to the time I purposely had students race to fill balloons with air only to use it as an attention getter later in class when one “accidentally” popped. I think back to the crazy classroom stories Naomi Knight has shared with me from her teaching days and the T-shirts you all made to elect Tom Hawthorn for MATA president. The late nights of the ag teacher social hour at the MATA conference when I learned just how intriguing your classroom lives can be. We all are undeniably unique and that’s what brings us together. This year has been interesting to say the least. We have all felt the many ups and downs that our careers have brought us since July. From retirements to new jobs and celebrations to virtual gatherings. I am beyond grateful that the opportunity to edit your newsletter had presented itself when it did. I have learned so much about the Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association and its members. I have been honored to engage with several stakeholders of MATA to include the University of Maryland College Park and Eastern Shore, Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Maryland FFA, and so many more. With each article that was written and organized into the newsletters I couldn’t help but feel blessed to be a part of an organization that truly creates a home for each of us “Insane Ag Teachers.” Even when the going gets tough you all collectively get tougher. I hope you too found the same enjoyment and value as I found and continue to bring the same love and support in the many months and years to come! Here is to the fourth and final issue of the year with hope of many more to come! Until next time.

-Kelcey Trewin



UniversityThoughts

This month we are featuring some updates and thoughts from our Land Grant and Flagship University, The University Of Maryland, with Dr. Melissa Welsh!



FearlesslyTech-Savvy

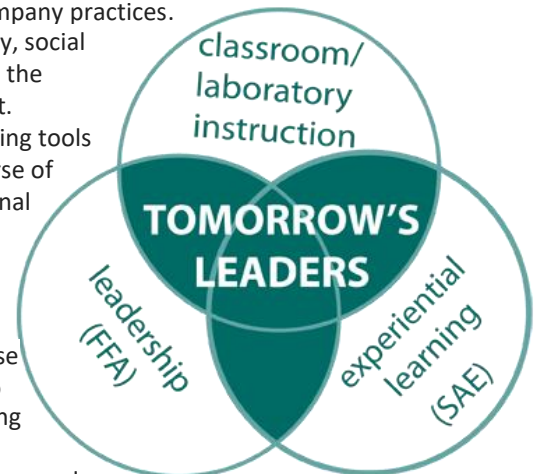
*Preparing our students for a professional technology-based future.
-Dr. Melissa Leiden Welsh*

Preparing students for an uncertain future is not a new topic of discussion in education. There are numerous studies which point to varying elements of concern as to what should be taught and its lasting effects. Career Technical Education continues to be steadfast in the integration of skills beyond the compulsory knowledge and skillset required to demonstrate proficiency in a selected focus area. Dr. James Greenan's CTE studies focused on "generalizable skills". Crawford, Lang, Fink, Dalton and Fielitz examined "soft skills" in a joint study for the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the University Industry Consortium (UIC). The current buzz term of "employability" skills spans both business and academic studies. Regardless of how these skills seem to be packaged and repackaged in studies, teachers continue to be creative in their efforts to integrate experiences to assist student's personal development. As technology has continued to impact how social skills develop, the current school climate was jolted into re-examining how communication, professionalism, leadership, self-management, teamwork and such can be delivered effectively in an online environment. Experiential learning within the Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) component of the 3-circle model enables students to develop and hone these valuable skills. The new SAE for ALL details numerous options for educators to guide student interests and monitoring of their self-directed learning. Challenging the student to use their social skill savvy and brainstorm a creative way to document and plan under these challenging environmental conditions align with many changes happening in industry to evolve company practices.

Unlike many other areas of agricultural study, social science requires a bit more time to truly see the effects of personal growth and development. Educators and students using focused planning tools and essential reflection activities in the course of learning help the learner to recognize personal growth and areas for potential further development. Online teachers can provide discussion prompts to facilitate reflection moments and peer guidance. The challenge can often be permitting some leeway in those discussion threads to permit the students to wander a bit as a mental pause before getting back on track toward the desired skill goal.

Assisting the students in setting their own personal learning goals is essential in helping our students becoming self-directed learners. The foundational indicators in each of the SAE for All guides provide a good starting place for these discussions. I look forward to hearing about you and your student's creative e-learning moments. Lastly, I continue to welcome individuals to mentor our future teachers –

go.umd.edu/mentorship.



Coming soon >>>

In The Next Issue

New officers? Who's this?

Virtual everything!

Thank goodness for summer



Are you excited for something next school year? Share it with us! We want to hear from you! Learning may have looked different this spring but that doesn't mean we can't be ready for the fall!

Kelcey Trewin

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