



Here, by the Owl

Issue No. 3 | November 2022

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MARYLAND AGRICULTURE EDUCATORS CONFERENCE

“Our Growth is Their Future”

Before the start of all the county fairs, Back-to-School nights, and SAE visits, more than thirty Maryland Ag teachers kicked off the final month of their summer break by attending MAEC ‘22 in St. Mary’s County. Through participation in a wide variety of agricultural experiences over four days, these teachers fully embodied the conference theme, “Our Growth is Their Future.”

Professional learning for Day 1 included two tour options along with three workshop sessions. Teachers could learn more about Agri-tourism and increasing agriculture awareness by touring Shlagel Farms, a third-generation family farm that’s been in continuous operation for 110 years, or they could learn more about shoreline restoration by conducting water quality analysis with seining nets in a local stream. Professional learning workshops included information on how to implement iCEV (an online CTE curriculum and certification platform), how to market an Ag program, and how to maximize the “green” in a greenhouse. Day 1 concluded with remarks by Robin McClean, Region 6 Vice President of the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

Day 2’s professional learning included two additional tour options and three workshop sessions. Teachers could get a hands-on experience touring the Sheepfield Cut Flower Farm or they could visit the Sotterly Plantation, a national historic landmark, learning about the importance of environmental stewardship and preserving historic sites. Professional learning included a hands-on, shoreline restoration workshop making oyster reef balls eventually placed in the St. Mary’s Watershed, an FFA crash course explaining resources, grants, and opportunities, and an informational session for submitting winning applications for the National Chapter Award. Day 2 concluded with a presentation by MSDE on Maryland’s Blueprint for Education.

The final day of the conference started with an update on Maryland FFA by Terrie Shank, followed by professional learning sessions on Trout in the Classroom and the Global Teach Ag Network. The conference concluded with the annual awards banquet with keynote speakers **Charlotte Davis**, Executive Director of the Rural Maryland Council, and **Colby Ferguson**, Legislative Director of Maryland Farm Bureau. Ms. Davis addressed the purpose of the

Rural Maryland Council and their involvement with projects improving the quality of life in rural communities. Mr. Ferguson encouraged Ag teachers to be proactive in the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland Public Schools.

Following the keynote speeches, NAAE and MATA awards (*listed on next page*) were presented, and the 2022-2023 MATA Executive Board was installed.



Outstanding Leadership Award:

Quinn Martin, Boonsboro HS, 2021-2022 MATA President

Years of Service Recognition Awards:

25 years – **Terry Nuwer**, Dorchester CTC

30 years – **Charles Gustin**, Calvert HS

35 years – **Teresa Stevens**, Tuscarora HS

40 years – **Thomas Hawthorne**, Linganore HS

Naomi Knight, MD FFA Program Coordinator

Teresa Shank, MD FFA Exec. Director & Asst. Director of Secondary Ed. for the MD Ag. Ed. Foundation

Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association (MATA) Awards:

Certified Professional Horticulturalist – **Diane Herndon**, Frederick CTC

Agricultural Production & Management – **Sarah Shriner**, Catoctin HS

National Association of Agriculture Educators (NAAE) Awards:

Teacher Turn the Key – **Kelly Bryant**, McDonough HS

Outstanding Early Career Teacher – **Dr. Stacy Eckels**, Southern HS

Outstanding Teacher – **Sarah Shriner**, Catoctin HS

Outstanding Mentor – **Sara Seiser**, Middletown HS

Lifetime Achievement – **Joe Linthicum (Retired)**, Francis Scott Key HS



Thank you to all of the individuals who helped make the 2021-2022 Maryland Agriculture Educator Conference possible!

MATA Board, 2022-2023:

Past President – **Quinn Martin**, Boonsboro HS

President – **Sarah Shriner**, Catoctin HS

President Elect – **Dr. Stacy Eckels**, Southern HS

Secretary – **Patricia Beachy**, Linganore HS

Treasurer – **Roy S. Walls, Jr.**

Social Media Reporter – **Amanda Farmer**, Clear Spring HS

Website Reporter – **Richard Stonebraker**, Frederick HS

Membership Chair – **Kelly Bryant**, McDonough HS

Student Representative – **Jill Palmer-Smith**, University of MD

PLANNING COMMITTEE:

Kelly Bryant, Co-Chair

Stacy Eckels, Co-Chair

Dorothy Birch

Naomi Knight

Terrie Shank

Jessica Staelens

PARTNERS:

**MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION (MAEF) ANNUAL BANQUET**

MATA members attended the MAEF Annual Banquet on November 3rd. MAEF supports agricultural outreach activities for K-12 students throughout the state.



Pictured (L-R): Richard Stonebraker, Stacy Eckels, Tom Hawthorne, Sarah Shriner, Sara Seiser, and Sarah Skinner.

NATIONAL JUNIOR HORTICULTURE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION RESULTS

Horticulture ID & Judging

Center of Applied Tech North – 2nd Place (Team)

Veda Stewart, Chrystian Hunt, and Cassia Lopez

Cassia Lopez, CAT-North – 2nd Place (Individual)

Horticulture Informative Writing

Logan Spanger, CAT-North – 1st Place





SARAH'S SCOOP

A Letter from the President

Sarah Shriner

Greetings from the Maryland Agricultural Teachers Association!

We are nearing or have completed the first term of the new school year. While we are getting to know our classes better and are opening up more, the students are feeling more comfortable as well and some may be pushing our buttons.

As you may have heard, I changed schools this year. Having been at the same school for 13 years, I had my own groove. It's been a challenge finding a new rhythm in an already established and very successful agriculture program. Students are testing me and my endurance in this profession, but with each new day, I make more connections with students and colleagues.

As the winter nears, teachers often go through a funk. Try your best to avoid the funk by focusing on the small wins. We aren't going to change the world in a day, but we can change it through our daily impact on students.

What do I mean by small wins? Let me name a few of mine this year:

- My family and I were driving through town and we passed 3 of my students who were excited to see me and wave. I was at the total opposite end of the county and saw a student at a volleyball game who made sure to come say hi.
- I had a school counselor tell me that a student loved my class this semester. I received a text message from a past student that I took to Iowa for the World Food Prize. He told me that he was working as a technician for an Engineering company near the high school and that I was right about him going into engineering.
- I received an email from a student asking for a letter of recommendation because my class helped her decide to major in Animal Science.
- I made some new coworker friends here and strengthened past relationships. My most difficult student asked to come to me for STEP (similar to study hall) and behaved himself.
- I have been told that I am their favorite teacher in my most challenging class.

Small wins will help get us through the holidays. We don't have to win a national contest or have a 100% pass rate on a certification exam. Some days, a win is hearing from a former student; some days, it's getting through the day without having to write a referral. The small wins add up and they do matter. Let's all try to focus on the positives this fall/winter. We've got this!

Warmest Regards,

Sarah Shriner

MATA TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Our MATA Teacher Spotlight is Aaron Geiman from Carroll County, MD. Aaron was nominated for his dedication to Agricultural Education, MATA, and NAAE. Aaron has been teaching for what will be 25 years on January 20, 2023. He received his teacher's education with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and Agriculture Education from Oklahoma State University.

Aaron then received his master's degree in CTE from the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore.

Since starting his teaching career Aaron has taught at two schools, North Carroll High (now closed), and Westminster High School. He teaches a CASE curriculum including Introduction to Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, Animal and Plant Biotechnology, Agriculture Research and Development, Animal Science, and Agriculture Mechanical Technology.

Aaron is very passionate about being a servant in the agriculture education field. He volunteers his time often and has held many leadership positions. He was the MATA President and MATA Secretary, two times each. He has held the office of NAAE Region 6 Secretary three times, and is an ACTE member.

Aaron states that his best memory as an agriculture teacher has been advising his first state star in Agriculture Placement. The person who has impacted his role in Agriculture Education the most? There were a few; Joe Linthicum, David Miller, and Dr. Jay Jackman.

When he isn't in the classroom he is either crabbing, attending heavy metal concerts, or commercial sheep shearing!

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



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

MATA membership is on the rise.

Current membership counts:

ACTE	7
MATA Active	32
MATA Affiliate	3
MATA Associate	3
MATA Life	22
MATA Student	4
NAAE Active	26
NAAE Associate	2
NAAE Life	23
NAAE Student	4



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

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



COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

MENTORSHIP MOMENTS WITH MAZZONE

Thomas Mazzone, University of Maryland

As we approach "training season" for CDE's and LDE's, my advice to teachers is to not stretch yourself too thin. As a new teacher, I wanted to get involved in it all. I quickly learned that doing so would mean that quite literally every evening of my personal life would be spent training students.

In some ways, Ag teachers are their own worst enemy. A very unfortunate, but very real unspoken notion exists amongst us that if you're not out there winning CDE's and taking teams to Nationals, that you're viewed as a lesser Ag teacher. Hear me loud and clear, your effectiveness and worth as an Ag teacher is not correlated with your FFA stats. Set your boundaries and do what you can. You don't need to be involved in every single CDE. Pick the ones you have personal interest and expertise in and encourage students to follow suit.

As an Ag teacher, I would rather have 1 first place team in a CDE I know well and can be successful in than have 5 eighth place teams in CDE's that I didn't have enough time to generate quality training materials for. If you have students that want to get involved in more, don't be afraid to let go and reach out for outside help. Some of my best CDE coaches were recently graduated students who were still living close to home and knew the content well because they had just done it the year prior. You are not expected to do it all, yet sometimes we fail to remember that.

The MATA Mentorship program capitalizes on the fact that many of us face the same struggles in the traditional Ag classroom. The hope is to make sure new teachers never feel like they are alone in tackling these challenges. This program offers the opportunity to share that advice and hear from a panel of season teachers. Topics include things like cellphone management, FFA management, work / life balance, training CDE teams, classroom organization, etc. Be on the lookout for more communications regarding meeting schedules and topics for the upcoming year.

A LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY

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

The second American agricultural revolution occurred between 1945-1970 with the transition from horse drawn equipment to tractors. In the last 2 years, there has been a realization of autonomous tractors onto production sites across the globe. As machinery continues to advance so have Agricultural education programs.

The Agricultural Science and Technology (AGST) Major - which includes specializations in Agricultural Education, Agronomy and Environmental Horticulture continues to adapt with new research and advances in technology. It also continues to be increasingly pivotal for programs to engage with stakeholders through reflective discussions as technology influences future practices.

Agricultural Education students participate in courses with content experts across 7 areas of agriculture. Students in AGST now have the opportunity to participate in a 3 series course set to prepare them to become a certified drone pilot.

Students would complete Advanced Crop Science (AGST400) and Tractor and Equipment Operation, Safety and Maintenance (AGST401) with a two-credit PLSC399 independent study course. Together, these three courses will provide students with hands-on drone operation in an agronomic setting while preparing them to take the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Part107 Unmanned Aircraft General – Small (UAG) exam.

These courses build upon the previous precision agricultural practices in courses by the agronomy instructor Dr. Bill Phillips. Ag Education students would be able to engage with applied drone technology in AGST 400 & 401, but necessarily need to complete the independent study unless they are intending to complete the FAA exam. Stay tuned to learn about more course opportunities for AGST students at the University of Maryland. <https://psla.umd.edu/undergraduate/degrees/agricultural-science-technology>

MARYLAND FFA TAKES ON THE NATIONAL FFA CONVENTION



Maryland FFA members, chapters, and supporters were recognized for their achievements during the 95th National FFA Convention held October 26-29, 2022, in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Maryland FFA members participated in 24 of the National FFA Career and Leadership Development Events.

American FFA Degree

Members who have successfully completed 540 hours of agricultural education instruction, productively invested \$7,500 or \$2,000 and 2,250 hours in a supervised agricultural experience program and demonstrated leadership abilities above the state level. Less than 1% of the total National FFA membership receive this degree.

Abigail Kinnard, *Catoctin HS*

Sierra Weatherly, *Catoctin HS*

Molly Harbaugh, *Frederick CTC*

Austin Welty, *Linganore HS*

Raleigh Lowdermilk, *Northern Garrett HS*

Abigail Wimmer, *Westminster HS*

Honorary American FFA Degree

Greg Stull, *Ag Teacher – Walkersville HS*

Increasing Membership

Maryland FFA State Officer Team

National Chapter Awards

Three Star

Boonsboro FFA

Brunswick FFA

Two Star

Catoctin FFA

Southern FFA

One Star

Parkside CTE

Gold Medal – Top 10 Nationally

Frank Delucia, *North Harford HS* – 2nd Place, Environmental & Natural Resource Mgmt.

Caroline McDonald, *Tuscarora HS* – 6th Place, Veterinary Science

Kelsey Zepp, *Francis Scott Key HS* – 6th Place & High Individual, Dairy Evaluation

Bryce Zepp, *Francis Scott Key HS* – 8th Place, Dairy Evaluation

Brianna Bongard, *Middletown HS* – 9th Place, Horse Evaluation

North Harford Team – 3rd Place, Environmental & Natural Resources

Francis Scott Key Team – 10th Place, Dairy Evaluation

Gold Medal

Emily Cassidy, *North Harford HS* – Nursery Landscaping

Johnathan VanBuskirk, *North Harford HS* – Environmental & Natural Resources

Ryan Layman, *North Harford HS* – Environmental & Natural Resources

Aaron Eng, *Linganore HS* – Forestry

Silver Medal

Catoctin Team – Livestock Evaluation

Linganore Team – Forestry

Middletown Team – Horse Evaluation

Southern Team – Farm Business Management

Tuscarora Team – Veterinary Science

Body Griffin, *Francis Scott Key HS* – Dairy Handling

Sierra Howell, *Linganore HS* – Creed Speaking

Bronze Medal

Catoctin Team – Agriculture Issues

Catoctin Team – Agriculture Sales

Catoctin Team – Marketing Plan

Francis Scott Key Team – Conduct of Chapter Meetings

Frederick Team – Food Science

Linganore Team – Parliamentary Procedure

North Harford Team – Meat Evaluation

North Harford Team – Nursery & Landscaping

Walkersville Team – Agriculture Power & Technology

Walkersville Team – Agronomy

Walkersville Team – Milk Quality Products

Walkersville Team – Poultry Evaluation

Kendall Abruzzese, *Catoctin HS* – Extemporaneous Public Speaking

Christy Enlow, *Northern Garrett HS* – Employment Skills

Lilliana Sonpar, *Howard County ARL* – Prepared Public Speaking



National FFA Scholarship applications are now open on [ffa.org](https://www.ffa.org) under the scholarship link. Only one application is required for multiple scholarship opportunities totaling close to \$2 million.

<https://www.ffa.org/participate/grants-and-scholarships/scholarships/>

Applications are due January 12, 2023. Encourage your students to apply!