

PERSPECTIVE

June 13, 2025



OKFB hosts 20 high school students for annual Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference

Twenty high school seniors from across the state developed their leadership skills and agricultural knowledge during Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference May 27-30 in Oklahoma City.

OYLA is a four-day annual event hosted by the OKFB Young Farmers & Ranchers to prepare high school students for a future career in agriculture to advance their leadership skills and network with young leaders.

The 20 students who attended were Channing Anderson, Coweta; Kyden Archuleta, Burlington; Case Brassfield, Minco; Lauren Crosthwait, Stillwater; Avery Fisher, Okeene; Devyn Frazier, Meeker; Hailey Helmke, Ratliff City; Elizabeth Hines, Tuttle; Rance Howard, Ringling; Lilly Keenan, Davis; Zoe Linhares, Broken Arrow; Katelee Martin, Alva; Hadley Ott, Ames; Kaden

Pililer, Purcell; Annie Schneider, Seiling; Keaton Slover, Coleman; Carli Thomas, Lexington; Jake Vulgamore, El Reno; and Carson Whitsitt, Blackwell.

"OYLA has equipped me with the resources necessary for me to succeed in agriculture now and in the future and be a voice for agriculture in my community," said Annie Schneider of Seiling, an OYLA participant.

Throughout the week, the group had the opportunity to tour local agricultural enterprises and more including Lopez Foods, Whitmore Farms, the Oklahoma City Zoo, the Oklahoma State University Student Farm and the Ferguson College of Agriculture. Students also spent an evening volunteering at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma where they packaged meals to support underserved Oklahomans.

Students also received a tour of the state Capitol led by the OKFB public

policy team as the group also learned about agricultural policy, the legislative process, OKFB's grassroots issues and priority bills, and the status of Oklahoma's legislative season.

OKFB President Rodd Moesel also shared Farm Bureau's work for agriculture and rural Oklahoma with the students.

Participants are selected through an application process, and the students selected represent some of Oklahoma's most promising high school students who will continue their leadership development in their local communities and beyond.

The students attending the conference plan to pursue a wide variety of agricultural degrees after high school including agribusiness, agricultural communications, animal science, pre-veterinary animal science and plant and soil sciences.

Payne County Farm Bureau hosts second-annual block party May 31



Payne County Farm Bureau hosted their second-annual block party with more than 1,400 attendees Saturday, May 31, at the Payne County Farm Bureau office.

The event featured more than 20 local vendors and small businesses with carnival-style games and food trucks.

Local Farm Bureau members had the opportunity to share the Farm Bureau and agriculture story with those in attendance.

The block party is a free event for the Stillwater-area community and businesses. The event connects community members with small and local businesses and agriculture.



Communications Conference registration due July 7

FFA Chapters can register for OKFB's FFA Communications Conference by **Monday, July 7**.

OKFB's FFA Communications Conference equips students with communications skills and tools to share their FFA chapter's story.

The conference will be held at the Hilton Garden Inn **Monday, July 21**.

Registration is available online at okfb.news/ignite25.

Nurse's Training Scholarship applications due July 10

Oklahoma nursing students can apply for the WLC Nurse's Training Scholarship. Applications are due **Thursday, July 10**.

The annual scholarship program awards three \$500 scholarships to students studying in a nursing program at an accredited college, university, vo-tech or trade school.

The application is available online at okfarmbureau.org/applications.

YF&R Summer Conference tentative schedule

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Summer Conference will be held July 25-27 in Sulphur.

Registration is currently available on the OKFB website at okfb.news/yfrsummer25 using the online form. Registration closes Wednesday, July 9.

Conference and hotel accommodations will be at the Artesian hotel in Sulphur. The cost of the conference is \$50 for individual Farm Bureau members or families. Collegiate Farm Bureau members may attend for free.

The schedule below is a tentative brief overview of the 2025 YF&R Summer Conference.

For questions about the conference or registration, contact Burton Harmon at (405) 523-2300.

Friday, July 25

6:30 p.m.

Dinner and welcome at SOLA

Saturday, July 26

8 a.m.

FBI Presentation

Pecan orchard tour / cattle ranch tour

Noon

Lunch at the Noble Pavillion

6:30 p.m.

Dinner at Doc's Food Truck Park in Latta

Sunday, July 27

Vespers

Public Policy legislative review and updates

Register online for the 2025 YF&R Summer Conference at okfb.news/yfrsummer25. For questions, contact Burton Harmon at (405) 523-2300.

ICYMI: Farm Bureau President emphasizes challenges for aging farm workforce

American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall testified Wednesday, June 4, on the challenges facing agriculture, as more farmers reach retirement age while fewer young farmers are entering the profession. Mr. Duvall testified before the Senate Special Committee on Aging.

President Duvall addressed a wide-ranging list of issues, and said it's crucial to ensure farmers can survive tough economic times to pass their farms to the next generation. Almost 40% of all farmers are at or beyond retirement age, while just 8% of farmers are under the age of 35.

"As I travel to farms across this country, I see a lot of gray hair, and while the wisdom of older generations is critical, we must ensure that we are making the way for young and beginning farmers to fill our boots," said Zippy Duvall, AFBF president.

After his opening statement, President Duvall took questions from lawmakers, including Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-Ala.), who asked about the struggles of keeping up with increases to the Adverse Effect Wage Rate, which sets the hourly rate for H-2A guestworkers. President Duvall responded, "The first

thing we need to do is for Congress to freeze the AEWR wage rate so farmers don't have to take another increase. And, give us time to work on this H-2A program so we can make a workable program for our employees and for the farmer. The way we're going now with the wage rate going up, we're going to price ourselves out of farming. We're not going to be able to pay the wage rate and stay in farming and provide those jobs. It's gotta be done and it's gotta be done quickly."

Ranking Member Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) asked about the mental health crisis in rural America, and what role Congress should play in expanding resources. President Duvall said, "With all the pressures of the farm, I realized what those pressures do to a man. Us old farmers, we're kind of crusty, we sit in the back of the room and think we're not supposed to talk about our feelings, but that's the worst thing you can do. The stigma that goes along with it and the embarrassment people think they experience is not really there. Really and truly, all they need to do is open up and talk. It's okay to not be okay, but it's not okay to not talk about it. That's why we went and started our Farm State of

Mind program."

When Sen. Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.) asked about farmers being forced to sell farmland to pay estate taxes or other bills, President Duvall replied, "If they're forced to sell that land and it comes out of production, it never goes back into production. There's so much competition now for land, it prevents young farmers and beginning farmers that want to go into agriculture, God help them, have a difficult time finding that land to do that. Availability of land, availability of money, loans, is one of the biggest stumbling blocks young farmers, beginning farmers have going into the business."

On the issue of trade, Committee Chair Rick Scott (R-Fla.) asked if America should pursue new international trade deals. President Duvall replied, "We have to try to improve our trade policy. What we've done in the past has not worked. We've not regained some of the markets we lost in the trade war eight years ago. So, we need trade deals. We need access. We need certainty. You give our farmers a level playing field and they'll compete with anyone on earth."

OKFB names 10 Oklahoma businesses to 2025 agriculture and rural development cohorts

Oklahoma Farm Bureau has selected 10 Oklahoma businesses to be part of the Oklahoma Grassroots Rural and Ag Business Accelerators program for 2025.

The 10 founders were assigned to one of two cohorts with individualized tracks based on their business innovation.

AgCelerate Oklahoma

AgCelerate Oklahoma focuses on innovations and technologies that have an on-farm or production agriculture application in an effort to diversify opportunities for farmers with a farmer-focused and farmer-led development program.

The four members of the AgCelerate Oklahoma 2025 cohort are WeCanna, a hemp seed and fiber manufacturing firm; 4Ag Manufacturing, an agricultural company from Elk City that specializes in no-till farming equipment; Hay Wrap

Recycled Products of Tahlequah, which upcycles hay net wrap into high-end flower pots; and a startup from Skiatook that is developing a variable no-till drill for two-wheeled tractors.

Activate Oklahoma

The Activate Oklahoma pipeline connects innovative rural Oklahoma businesses with numerous resources and assistance with curriculum provided by Oklahoma Small Business Development Center. The Activate Oklahoma track is designed for any rural-based business with an innovation or product that will bring economic opportunities to Oklahoma's rural communities.

The members of Activate Oklahoma are Foviio of Bartlesville, a client management platform for professional photographers; Stinger Jugheads, a Wagoner-based company that specializes in recreational and

commercial fish harvesting using jugline methods; Ransom's BBQ of Tuttle, which has developed a line of signature BBQ sauces and rubs; Gimel Holdings of Holdenville, a company that developed a platform to connect rural residents with housing and maintenance services; Sober Sally's of Choctaw, a rideshare service that transports impaired drivers and their vehicles; and SkyReach of Edmond, which flies drones for local emergency services.

The 10 businesses, all hailing from rural Oklahoma communities with a population of 50,000 people or less, will complete a vigorous bootcamp training and other programming in the coming months.

For more information on the accelerators program, visit okfb.news/Accelerator.

**PUBLISHED BY
OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU**

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OKFB YF&R to host 2025 Shotgun Shoot Fundraiser Aug. 15 in Guthrie

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee will host their annual Shotgun Shoot Fundraiser Friday, August 15, at Silverleaf Shooting Sports near Guthrie.

Registration is now open through Friday, August 1, on the OKFB website using the online form at okfb.news/shotgun25, for sponsors, teams and individuals who will compete in one of three divisions for youth shooters, collegiate shooters and an open division.

The annual event features a sporting-clays-style shoot that tests the shotgun skills of teams of four competitors at stations that mimic real-world hunting scenarios.

The event will begin with registration at 8 a.m. followed by a mandatory safety meeting at 9 a.m. Shooting will start immediately following the safety meeting, and ammunition will be

provided to shooters.

Prizes will be awarded in the three divisions along with a prize for the overall high shooter.

Sponsorships are available for organizations, companies and individuals at three levels, including \$1000 title sponsorships, \$750 platinum sponsorships and \$500 gold sponsorships. Title sponsors receive two four-person teams along with sponsor signs and logo recognition; platinum sponsors receive one four-person team along with sponsor signs and logo recognition; and gold sponsors receive one four-person team in addition to a sponsor sign.

Four-person teams can register for \$450 per team, and individual shooters can register for \$125 per person. Registration fees are due the day of the event.

Each registration includes a lunch,



and additional lunch tickets can be purchased for \$10 each. Golf carts can be reserved for the day of the shoot for \$100 on a first-come, first-served basis.

Proceeds from the event benefit the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture to help the foundation accomplish its mission of educating the public about agriculture and supporting Oklahoma's agriculture community through a variety of programs.

For questions on registration or sponsorship, contact Holly Carroll at (405) 523-2300.