

Research in Action (Abstracts)

Non-technical Skills and Traits Needed to be Career Ready Graduates as Perceived by Agribusiness Employers and Recruiters

by Thomas H. Brand III

The purpose of the study was to determine the skills needed by students of the Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Sciences to secure employment after graduation. The population consisted of 211 agribusiness employers who have attended the Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry and Consumer Sciences Biannual Career Fairs. A descriptive research design was used for this study. A major finding of this study was employers rated graduates as somewhat or not prepared in several communication and business skills and business abilities. There were various skills important to employers for the success of gradu-

ates in entry level positions. These skills included, but were not limited to: effective verbal skills, oral communication, listening, following instructions, time management, planning and completing projects, professional behavior, leadership, and professional appearance.

“Almost everyone hired, even into specialist jobs, will at some time or another find themselves speaking or presenting information. It is the nature of our jobs to be prepared to share information with the public, other professionals, and the media. To that end, communications skills are criti-

cal. The ability to speak intelligently on your subject, yet make it understandable to the audience you have at that moment is very important. Writing and other non-verbal skills also play an important part in our agency. It cannot be stressed enough that these skills will do nothing but help in the job hunting process. It can start with something as simple as a firm handshake and direct eye contact.” (Anonymous respondent from the National Park Service)

Tom will receive a M.S in Agricultural Education from West Virginia University on May 15, 2005. The full thesis will be available after May 15 at: <http://etd.wvu.edu/>.

Characteristics of Farmers' Market Vendors in West Virginia

by Stacy M. Miller

The purpose of this study was to identify the characteristics of farmers' market vendors in West Virginia, including products, season extension methods, promotional strategies, and sales levels. Such an assessment sought to identify the obstacles and educational needs relevant to farmers' market vendors in order to develop priorities for supporting the growth and success of farmers' markets as an integral part of sustainable local food systems in West Virginia.

While the majority of products produced by vendors were vegetables, it was found that products in other categories, par-

ticularly processed products, are used to extend marketing seasons to a small degree. Less than half of the population surveyed reported use of any specific season extension techniques. Meat and dairy were the least represented categories, corresponding to many respondents' desire to better understand processing and health regulations for both these and other value-added products.

While a slight majority of vendors appeared satisfied with current length of the market season and enforcement of market rules, many identified increased adver-

tising as the most important priority for change. Common educational needs identified by vendors include education and outreach to consumers, pest control, and ways of communicating with other farmers' markets in West Virginia. Chief obstacles to success identified by vendors include resellers (i.e. 'pin-hookers'), unfair or inadequate market management, and a lack of advertising.

Stacy will receive a M.S in Agricultural Education from West Virginia University on May 15, 2005. The full thesis will be available after May 15 at: <http://etd.wvu.edu/>.

Mass Communication Delivery Methods Used and Possessed

by Extension Agents in West Virginia

by Lisa M. Neehouse

The purpose of the study was to identify which mass communication methods were being utilized for delivering information to current and potential clientele by West Virginia University Extension Agents. Results of the study provided information regarding the frequency of use, preference as a delivery method, skill rating, source of training, desire for additional training, and availability of each mass communication delivery methods by West Virginia Extension Agents.

The findings of the study concluded that West Virginia University Extension Agents most frequently used and mostly preferred to publish in newspapers as a mass communication delivery method. The majority of West Virginia University Extension Agents rated their delivery skills as adequate and above. West Virginia University Extension Agents most frequent source of training was attributed to experience. The majority of the agents did not feel a need for additional training. The majority of West Virginia University Ex-

tension Agents had some access to each of the mass communication delivery methods.

Lisa will receive a M.S in Agricultural Education from West Virginia University on May 15, 2005. The full thesis will be available after May 15 at: <http://etd.wvu.edu/>.

“Even if you are on the right track, you'll eventually get run over if you just sit there.” Will Rogers

Turtle Soup and Truss Monkeys

by Shannon Boswell, Agricultural Education Teacher, Summers County HS

I have always heard that your first year teaching is one of the fastest and greatest learning experiences. That may be an understatement. The past year has been an experience unlike any other I have ever had. My unique situation began last May, when I was offered a position at Summers County High School that required starting a new agricultural program. Within a matter of weeks I was overwhelmed with the introduction to the world of requisitions, travel forms, and purchase orders. Starting a new program can be exciting because it offers you the chance to set the program your way. It can also be very challenging, because there is no magical list of items a program should have. An experienced teacher may have a very different take on things than one who is just starting.

My biggest challenge is also one of my greatest opportunities in these first few years; that of educating the students, the administration, fellow teachers, and the community to what an agricultural program is and should be. It has been decades since there was a program in Summers County; so in order to begin the quest to educate, I felt that I must reach out to my biggest supporters and establish an advisory committee. I would have never dreamed that they would be so ready to go to bat for a program still trying to take

root and establish itself. Armed with the outspoken support of this committee we have begun to educate the administration and other community members to how important agricultural education is to the students.

The second part of the challenge was to educate the students and teachers about this “vocational” class. We all know that at times vocational classes can be perceived as a negative. I would have to say that the faculty has welcomed the program with open arms. From the start of school I have stressed to my students what a unique opportunity they have to be part of the building process of this new program. The students have taken ownership of the program; from building a new greenhouse, to setting up new equipment, to holding their first annual National FFA Spirit week, to meeting Congressman Nick Rahall. They have shined. Teachers have made it a point to comment on the students and the changes that they have seen in them. As a result of the students’ ownership and pride in the program, the teachers have seen first hand the influence that agricultural programs have on its students.

This year has been full of challenges, rewards, excitement, laughter, tears, and

numerous frustrations. Through it all I have learned that it is never stupid to ask questions; to ask for help; to make friends

with the custodians, secretaries, and maintenance staff; and that it really is easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission. Through the ups and downs of the past year, I can attest that WV Ag teachers truly are a family. I would like to thank those of you who have spent countless hours on the phone giving me guidance and council. I would not change one moment of the past year. Yes even the snapping turtle in my desk is a great memory. At the end of the day I can say that I have developed the fever. In closing I would like to thank my high school agricultural teachers for encouraging me to follow in their footsteps.

Shannon completed a B.S in Agricultural Education from West Virginia University in 2002 and is currently teaching agricultural education at Summers County High School.



Reflections of a Beginning Extension Agent

by Brian Wickline, WVU Extension Service, Monroe County

It has now been nine years since I walked the halls of the Ag school on a daily basis, but I still have a lot of fond memories of Morgantown and continue to be involved with and support WVU. My first position after graduation was with the WVU Extension Service. I was hired in the fall of 1996 to serve as the Program Coordinator of the Greenbrier River Hydrologic Unit Area, a position I held for four years. I was responsible for continuing and enhancing an existing integrated crop management program. Most of my work was done on dairies and beef cattle farms in Greenbrier and Monroe Counties. I sampled soil, comprised nutrient management plans and recommendations as well as providing planting and herbicide advice to producers. It was during this time that I became involved in precision agriculture research with a local crop consultant.

Precision agriculture is a fascinating new technology where by researchers and producers are able to analyze soil fertility data on a specific point within a field. This data then allows for site specific applications of nutrients and liming materials. This grant funded position ended in 2000, but it gave me a tremendous amount of “much needed” practical knowledge in the field of agronomy, which I use daily in my current position.

In 2001, after working for eight months as a private crop consultant, I was employed by the West Virginia Conservation Agency, as a grassland technician. This was a very similar role to the previous position held with WVU Extension, except the majority of the work dealt with pastureland as opposed to cropland. This role consisted of

the promotion of best management practices on pasture and grassland acres. Once again I was fortunate

enough to be able to work in an agricultural production orientated position, which is something I immensely enjoy. With a strong livestock background, and now having a robust understanding of crop and grassland management, I should be edu-



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Derrick Bender

Teaching is one of the most rewarding and trying events I have ever been a part. Many things I have done as a college student take much effort and time; however, teaching takes the slack out of the rope of effort. While teaching you may do a good job for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the class; yet, you let up a little and it will bite you. Lesson plans, discipline, and student variation all play a role in this.

Before student teaching began one of the things that scared me was the lesson plan. In methods, and other classes, it seemed as though the lesson plans were endless. We spent hours and hours going over lesson plans. Yet, as I student teach I am bothered less and less about lesson plans. Of course there is still work to be done with lesson plans; but, the more lesson plans a person makes the easier they are to make.

Student teaching at Clay-Battelle High school has proven to be a great experience. After completing my student teaching I can say without a doubt that Agriculture Education is the correct career choice.

On my second day of teaching my classes I walked into the classroom and found I had a substitute teacher. I quickly became very nervous because I had just begun teaching my first class the day before. Now, I was expected to take charge of all the classes. Through out the day things went relatively well and after school I met with my Freshman creed contestant where we practiced for his competition. During the practice I helped him in expressing himself

Over the past several weeks, I have begun to understand what it really means to be a teacher. Teaching is more than preparing lessons and instructing students. Teaching is being a friend, a mentor, a referee, and a positive influence. In today's society so many students are juggling their schoolwork between sports, extra curricular activities, and even unsteady homes.

Being a teacher takes self-discipline and dedication. When the bell rings at 2:45 my day is nowhere near to being complete. Working with FFA students on record books, helping students prepare for their spring CDE's and listening to the students about

Today teachers have such a wealth of information available. Lesson plans are easier to make than ever before.

Discipline with students is a very educational experience. I do not know how it is for others; however, it seems some of the most likable and bright students are the most apt to act up. From what little I know I feel it is best to lay down the law and then stick to it. This is not easy and it is not a neat and new idea; yet, it works the best.

The best way to handle students with different abilities is still a mystery to me. One of the most admirable things I have ever seen is a student who has to work harder than other students do his work and succeed without complaining. Student teaching was an education to me in many ways. Lesson plans, discipline, and student

Ryan Saxe

and gaining confidence when he spoke. He made great strides during our practice and as he left he said, "Thank you, Mr. Saxe." He then walked out and the door closed. There I was standing in the front of the room looking at the empty desks and the quiet classroom. I let out a huge sigh and said to myself, "I made it." It was then that I had a revelation that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. That day I made a difference in at least one child's life, and what a great feeling it is to know you made a difference.

What made my experience truly enjoyable was working with my students and their parents outside the classroom on SAE

Donielle Inskeep

their passions are only a few of the events which fill my afternoons.

The tedious chore of writing lessons and preparing activities consume my evenings, but it is the activities I complete when the other teachers go home that make the agriculture department second to none. Preparing hands on labs and greenhouse activities allows students to learn first hand how the agriculture industry works. Teaching through life experiences keeps the students coming back and interested in the agriculture industry.

Student teaching has taught me to be a better listener. I remember being in high

management are only part of the education. However, I am confident this information is useful now and will be in the future.

Derrick completed his student teaching under the direction of Mr. Steve Kisner at South Garrett High School, Maryland.



Front: Amy Jo Harshman, Nathan Taylor
Back: Derrick Bender, I

visits and activities. If you express interest in the student's daily life and show that you really care about what they are involved in, it means the world to that child and it will make your experiences truly amazing.

I also found that utilizing all of my resources was truly beneficial. I found the best resource of all is support from fellow colleagues. I would like to personally thank my students, their parents, my fellow student teachers, Mr. Kent Saul my cooperating teacher, and Ms. Mary Phillips my inspiration to teach agriculture. Without you, I would have truly missed a great student teaching experience.

Ryan completed his student teaching under the direction of Mr. Kent Saul at Clay Battelle High School.

school and wondering if my teachers really did care what I did outside of their classroom. I believe being an effective teacher is putting the extra effort forth to see your star quarterback play in his senior football game and cheering on the freshman during their spring tryouts. Talking to my students and becoming a part of their life has helped with participation in the classroom and brought respect to the classroom as well.

Student teaching takes numerous hours of planning, researching, and preparing. Only through time management and careful organization can you be successful.

Donielle completed her student teaching under the direction of Ms. Tonjia Mayne, Urbana High School, Maryland.

2005 Student Teachers



Nathan Taylor, Amy Riggle, Donielle Inskeep, Diane Ogg, Ryan Saxe

As I look back over the 12 weeks I spent as a student teacher at Hundred High School many thoughts come to mind; how excited and scared I was that first day of class, the

warm welcome I received from the students and the community, and most of all a chance to work with a man that I have looked up to as one of the greatest agriculture educators and motivators that I have known in my life, Mr. Wilkins. My first few days were spent

The Joys and Discomforts of Student Teaching: Student teaching brings on a new experience or situation everyday. There is never a dull moment when educating high school students. Just like any other job there are going to be things a person loves and things a person dislikes about the job, but that comes with the territory. In my short 12 weeks at South Carroll High School in Carroll County, Maryland, I have learned that preparation is the key. If you are not prepared physically and mentally about a lesson it shows and students sense it. Being prepared is not just about having your lesson plan completed, but also having the handouts printed off, answer keys completed, notes, and having read about the subject to answer questions you may get.

Maturity is a major issue that I have faced. Many students are not mature enough

Student Teaching: The Good, Bad and Yes Sometimes Ugly: My student teaching experience has been a memorable one. On day one I was extremely nervous but those butterflies subsided after about a week. I was no longer nervous, but I didn't feel like I was really reaching the students. I began teaching the class I thought would be the easiest. It was then that I decided to pull

getting to know the students and the workings of the high school. Mr. Wilkins and I discussed the units that I would teach and made a timeline for the weeks to come.

The experiences that I will hold dearest for years to come was working with a creed speaker for the regional contest and living at Hundred to be part of the community. My creed speaker was a person who had never spoken in front of large groups. It gave me an opportunity to teach this student a very important skill in life. We spent hours honing her presentation of the FFA Creed and working on questions. When the time came for the contest she was nervous and did not perform as well as she could have. I am proud to say that she worked hard at improving her skills as a public speaker and later auditioned for and is part a school play. Living in Hundred proved to be a gold mine of experiences for me. I went to all but three high school boys and girls basketballs games while I was there. Combining both teams I had all but four players in class.

Amy Jo Harshman

to handle certain situations, which often leads to behavioral problems. Whatever you do, stay consistent. If you correct one student for doing or saying something immature, be sure to correct all students for doing the same thing. Something that I have tried and it seems to work is making labs or going to the greenhouse (something nontraditional) a reward for students who are mature enough to handle the responsibility. Those students who are not mature enough to handle a situation are given an alternative assignment to complete.

My favorite part about student teaching is when the student finally understands, or when they worked real hard at something and in return they get a good grade on an assignment or project. Those are the days when I feel like I accomplished something. Seeing a student smile from ear to

Diane Ogg

out all the stops and try every teaching strategy I had learned. From that day forward that class was mine. The class I'm talking about is an upper level class that was just waiting for me to prove myself. I had to show them that not only could I talk the talk, but I could walk the walk. That class was my Horticulture 2/3 class, and since that day they continue to challenge me in their quest

Nathan Taylor

I enjoyed going to the games and meeting parents and members of the community. I believe that the students had a greater appreciation for me in the classroom because of the time I took after school to watch them and cheer them on in their afterschool activities. Both teams won their sectional game and after the nets were cut down at the girls' game, the creed speaker I mentioned earlier and another student gave me a clipping of the net as a keepsake.

Finally, I would like to offer a few bits of advice for future student teachers. Always smile as your students enter your classroom. Be positive to students and let him or her know when they did well. Take the time to participate in school activities other than what is going on in the agriculture program. And always remember to have fun and enjoy what you are doing; there is no better experience than student teaching.

Nathan completed his student teaching under the direction of Mr. Virgil Wilkins at Hundred High School.

ear for achieving a goal is something that will always make your job brighter.

If I were to give advice to teachers and future teachers who read this article it would be to use all of your resources. Don't be afraid to call up a colleague, community member, or business person to ask for help. When you go to places where businesses or organizations are giving away information (ie...National FFA Convention, Farm and garden shows, etc..) don't hesitate to go up to a booth and start talking to people. Inform them that you are an agriculture teacher and explain what your students do. Exhibitors will give you all kinds of information that can be used to help educate students. And remember the most important thing to do while teaching is to have FUN!!!

Amy Jo completed her student teaching under the direction of Ms. Teresa Adkins at South Carroll High School, Maryland.

for knowledge. They utilize every idea and suggestion I give them and continue to grow and develop.

I'm finding success in my other classes as well. Engine and Power 1 was especially difficult for me because I didn't have a lot of knowledge and experience to draw from.

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Diane Ogg (Continued from page 5)

Fortunately, I had a cooperating teacher who made engines easy for me to understand, and in turn I was able to explain what I had learned to my students. What I initially lacked in that class was confidence: confidence in my ability to learn the subject matter and then portray that information to the students. With each passing day, I became more confident and that made me a better teacher.

Forestry and wildlife is another class I thought I would struggle with, but as it turns out I'm really enjoying myself and learning a great deal about Mother Nature. It has been a challenge to teach this class in terms of visual aids. I'm trying to utilize all the visual technology at my fingertips, but I find that to be a challenge. When I want students to see pictures of the animals, I often find myself reverting back to PowerPoint.

When they tell you to teach to all the students and utilize all the teaching techniques, listen up! That information is invaluable. Another piece of advice is to start lesson planning early. You can never have too many lesson plans in your arsenal.

I'd be lying if I said it was all easy. There have been some days that were uphill battles that felt as if they'd never end. During student teaching my day started early and ended late with lots of teaching, planning and research in between. Everyday I arrived at school at 7:00 a.m. and left sometime between 3:30 and 5:00. Once at home I felt like I was glued to my computer screen, Microsoft Word, and the Internet. Bedtime came earlier than ever before, and television became a thing of the past. Recently, my evenings have been filled with floriculture practice and regional contests.

I mentioned ugly in the title because I've had a couple of experiences with ugly. The first being a drug deal that went down in my class. As soon as I discovered the situation, I felt completely irresponsible for letting it happen. I went to talk to the administration during my planning period, and they assured me that I wasn't irresponsible and even the most experienced teacher would not have caught these students. From that experience I have set up an appointment to work with a local deputy sher-

iff to familiarize myself with the warning signs. The last "ugly" is trying every tactic that you know to get to a student to learn something or anything, and they just don't care.

For those of you planning to student teach, I offer a few suggestions for making that decision. When deciding where to go, set guidelines for what you need to experience during student teaching. I chose Walkersville High School based on the strengths and diversity of the two teachers at the school. I also based my decision on the outstanding FFA Chapter, school support, and a powerful alumni organization. Also, you need to decide if you would rather teach in a single or multiple teacher program. In a multi-teacher department, there is always the possibility of personality conflicts. With only two weeks of student teaching left, I can easily say I was successful, and if given the choice I would gladly choose to go to the same school.

Diane completed her student teaching under the direction of Mr. Greg Stull and Ms. Sarah Welty at Walkersville High School, Maryland.

Follow-up: Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) **by Dave Workman, WVU Extension Service, Hardy County**

As you might recall in the November-December issue I indicated that in West Virginia we are only at the beginning of the AFO/CAFO experience. How true! In one of the first actions of the Rules Committee of the WV State Legislature was that they voted to put on hold the WVDEP's permit for CAFO's in WV. That was the topic of the last issues inclusion from me. We knew that this was in committee but expected that the DEP would see it fly easily through committee. It seems that our farm lobby that includes most visibly the WV Farm Bureau and the WV Poultry Association, does have a voice, and can be heard effectively in Charleston. The stated reason that the committee held up its adoption of the permit was

because of the pending lawsuits that had yet to be acted on at the Federal level. In the last few weeks the Second District, US Court of Appeals released a 65 page ruling on the issue. The ruling it appears was fair to both arguments! Both sides got something that they could be encouraged about. Now, it falls back to the EPA and the states see what this all really means. Even now, our state Department of Agriculture and DEP are studying and trying to interpret what this all means to what was drafted and what changes will need to be incorporated to bring the WV permit into line with Federal guidelines. Even with the changes that were mandated by the ruling of the court, some of our states farmers will still most

certainly be included in the CAFO permitting system. How many? Which ones? Will we still have a general or will a site specific permit be required? And many other questions will be asked and answered in the coming weeks. WVDA and the WVU Extension Service are moving ahead with planned educational sessions to inform the likely affected farmers of what it means to them. The goals at this point are to help our farmers to understand the process, whatever it finally looks like, and to assist them in successfully fulfilling the requirements that will likely follow. We will continue to inform and educate the farm community as these issues emerge. The AFO/CAFO experience in WV? The saga continues. More next time.

Dave recommended the reader review the US- Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit 2/28/05 decision on animal feeding operations. Go to: <http://www.ca2.uscourts.gov:81/> and view docket number 33-4470.

Personal

On May 16th I will begin a series of tests leading up to open heart surgery on Thursday, May 19th. Currently the septum of my heart is enlarged to the point it is blocking the flow of blood to the aorta (and the rest of the body). Reduced flow of blood

- reduced flow of oxygen - you get the picture. The surgery will remove a portion of the enlarged septum in an attempt to eliminate the blockage. They estimate that I will be in the Cleveland Clinic hospital for 5-7 days, take approximately three

weeks to start "feeling good," and not lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk during the first nine weeks following the surgery. Your thoughts and prayers will be greatly appreciated.

Harry Boone

Editorial (Continued from page 1)

learn about the FFA. In addition, one Saturday each spring, we conducted a student SAE tour. We identified 3-4 model SAE programs and invited these key individuals to tour the students' operations. Students talked about their SAE operations and how they were related to the classroom/laboratory instruction. This allowed the group to learn first hand about the SAE component of our program.

Prepare all State Reports: The information on the state reports provide you and the State Department of Education with valuable data to promote your program. The most important report is the summary of SAE accomplishments. This will give you valuable data on the economic impact of your program on the local economy. A recent study in Iowa found that on average students earned \$1,443 per year from their SAE. These earnings will turn over several times before leaving the local economy. Consider the impact your students make on the local economy. Business savvy leaders cannot ignore this contribution.

Keep Public Informed: Now that you have the key stakeholders informed of your progress/activities, don't forget about the most important group, the local taxpayers. These are the individuals that elect the school board members — that hire the administrators — that hire the teachers. Take advantage of every opportunity to get your students' activities before the general public. Consider unique opportunities to publicize your program such as selecting a "SAE Student of the Month." This is a perfect way to develop a good public relations program.

Consider an Adult Program: Yes, I know that teaching day students is a full-time job. Yes, I know that an agricultural educator needs personal time for his/her family. I also know that next to establishing an advisory committee, organizing an adult class can be the most important thing you do as a teacher. The adult class is composed of "taxpayers" who can make demands on elected officials and assist your program in surviving and growing.

Susan Sclafani, Assistant Secretary, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), in a report to the National FFA Organization's Board of Directors stated that agricultural education was the best model for a program that meets the needs of the "No Child Left Behind" mandates. I agree that we have a tremendous model if we implement it properly. It is your responsibility as the local teacher to insure the total program is implemented fully and properly. Will the total implementation of the agricultural education model prevent your program from coming under attack? No, **IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU!!!** However, if you have taken the steps outlined above and you come under attack, you can face the situation with the assurance that you did everything you could to protect your program.

The opinions expressed in the editorials are those of the editor and do not necessarily represent official positions and/or opinions of the Agricultural and Environmental Education program, the Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Sciences, or West Virginia University.

Reflections of a Beginning Extension Agent (Continued from page 3)

cated enough to be the ultimate county agriculture agent, or so I thought.

Times change, "It's No Longer Cows and Plows," was the title of a prepared speech by a FFA student in 1988 or 1989. Wow, this statement was true then, and especially now. The position of county agent, which I have learned over the past year and a half, is a very diverse role. We are responsible for providing educational opportunities and technical assistance to all, not just one specific area of agricultural producers. We work with several groups within a county or region to provide alternative marketing opportunities. County agents work with producers to implement new innovative ideas, as well as compiling research data on these ideas, which can later be used by other producers. We work closely with 4-H programs and FFA advisors to increase knowledge, provide leadership, motivation, and help our youth become educated, productive citizens within our communities. That's not cows and plows. I feel very fortunate to be able to work in Monroe County, my home county. I am also privileged to work with such a close knit group of caring

agricultural agents and specialists who are always willing to offer help at any time.

Over the past year I have spent a considerable amount of time in the area of livestock marketing. Monroe County is the second largest beef cattle producing county in the state. In 2001, Bobby Cheves, the Extension agent in Monroe County, and I started a calf marketing pool that has grown approximately 60%-70% each year since 2001. In 2006 the Greenbrier Valley Livestock Marketing Pool's goal is targeted to market 1000 head of calves through the Eastern Panhandle's Beef Quality Assurance Sale. During the spring of 2004 a small ruminant group was formed to target marketing sheep and goats. In 2004 more than 300 head of sheep and goats were marketed through this program. Both of these marketing groups have implemented an educational component into their marketing program. In 2004 a niche marketing group was formed to market all natural pasture finished meats. This group is currently working with the Monroe County Board of Education, and the Monroe County Technical Center to complete a

meat processing facility that will serve several functions within the county. Last year was a huge success for 4-H judging teams within the county. The Grassland Evaluation team earned first place in the state grassland evaluation contest and later went on to win the National 4-H Grassland Evaluation Contest in Springfield, Missouri in June. The Monroe County 4-H land judging team placed first in land judging and homesite at the state land judging contest and, along with Barbour County, will represent West Virginia in the National 4-H Land and Range Judging Contest in Oklahoma next month.

This past year I have definitely been on an upward learning curve, due to the complexity and diversity of this position. I have made many new contacts, not only with my colleagues, but within my home county. Practical production agriculture knowledge is a great attribute in this position, but an individual that does not possess communication, critical thinking, and visionary skills would have a difficult time portraying a county extension agent or an FFA advisor in this ever changing world of today's agriculture. Hopefully, I am up to the challenge.

