



# West Virginia AG ED NEWS and VIEWS

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## *Reflections on a Career Devoted to Agricultural Education* by Donald Michael

This writer retired February 28, 2007, from what I will term as an eventful joy-ride in Vocational Agriculture/Agricultural Education. Time does truly fly when you are having fun.

Forty-four years ago God opened the blue and gold door to opportunity for this Ritchie County farm boy when He introduced me to that exciting world we know as Agricultural Education. Little did I know at the time that I would be involved in such a dynamic profession through which He would continually shower my wife and me with the richest of blessings, among the richest being the gift of the Agricultural Education FAMILY. We live in a world of change. But one constant always remained during my nearly 34 years on state staff. That constant was the integrity, commitment and compassion of the West Virginia agriculture teacher and the extended family that supports our program.

The Ag Education FAMILY has a bond that is the envy of others. Their compassion for each other and those terrific young men and women in the blue and gold jackets is second to none, as can be evidenced by the tireless energy they expend daily to make a positive difference in their lives.

I have observed many significant, positive changes in the Agricultural Education program since those days in the mid-sixties when I proudly donned the blue and gold jacket. Let me elaborate on a few, and note a challenge or two in the process.

☺ FFA — Perhaps the biggest change was opening the door to females in 1969, and they have certainly made their mark. Since then FFA has grown by leaps and bounds in the programming and services

available to agricultural education students. The premier career development opportunities and related scholarship and awards structure afforded students are incredible.

☺ Curriculum — When I became a Vocational Agriculture teacher in 1971, a majority of local programs emphasized production agriculture and agricultural mechanics. Curriculum was driven by the documents of the day (referenced by the color of their covers) – the “Green Hornet” (guide to production agriculture courses) and the “Yellow Jacket” (guide to agricultural mechanics instruction). Today’s Agricultural Education program is driven by multiple guides and a system of concentrations that feature a diversity of exciting courses to prepare students for the broad spectrum of careers in the global agriculture, food, fiber and natural resources systems.

A major challenge that continues to confront our program is accessibility to students via the school delivery structure and scheduling process. The eight period format and modified block have helped to provide greater accessibility. However, increasing graduation requirements combined with other local, state and federal initiatives, are challenging all elective programs. On some fronts, we also continue to be challenged by the thinking – If you are bound for college, you shouldn’t be taking a vocational course! I won’t get started commenting on this ill-conceived pattern of thinking. In the future it will be more crucial than ever for our profession to work closely with all stakeholders to ensure that administrators, counselors and decision-makers on the local, state and national levels realize the importance of agricultural education in providing pathways through which individuals can and



do develop the academic and technical skills necessary to become productive citizens.

☺ Facilities – Thirty-six years ago facilities focused primarily on production agriculture, with most sites having a classroom and agricultural mechanics laboratory. While both components remain vitally important, our facilities of today also feature aquaculture systems, agricultural biotech labs, animal processing units, extensive plant science systems, small animal care labs, computer technology arrangements, etc. Thanks to progressive agriculture teachers and tremendous support from sources such as the State Director of Career and Technical Education, the West Virginia Legislature, West Virginia Department of Agriculture, and the private sector, our facilities and accompanying instructional technology are among the nation’s finest.

☺ Supervised agricultural experienced programs have continued to diversify and maintain their presence as a vital foundation strength of our program, affording students with unique educational opportu-

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## 2006 Division of Resource Management's Outstanding Teacher:

### Dr. Deborah A. Boone

Dr. Deborah Boone, Assistant Professor, Agricultural and Extension Education, was named the Outstanding Teacher in the Division of Resource Management for 2006. The Division of Resource Management is composed of faculty members in Agricultural and Resource Economics, Landscape Architecture and Agricultural and Extension Education. As a result, she was one of five faculty members considered for the 2006 Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Sciences' Outstanding Teacher.

In 2006 Dr. Boone taught eight three-hour courses and two two-hour courses and generated 527 student credit hours. Student evaluations, which rank among the top in the College, indicate that Dr. Boone is a dedicated, knowledgeable, and effective teacher. Over the past year she advised 18 undergraduate students, served as major professor to six M.S. students and Ph.D. student, and served on 12 M.S. and two Ph.D. committees.

In addition to her traditionally delivered courses, Dr. Boone is one of the leaders in distance learning. She has developed and delivers two distance education courses via eCampus. In addition she uses the eCampus system to enhance her traditionally taught courses. Prior to her tenure at West Virginia University, Dr. Boone developed and taught "Extension Program Development" and "Extension Program Evaluation" via distance education for North Carolina State University. Dr. Boone also serves as the eCampus "Point of Contact" (POC) for the Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Sciences. Her duties include answering questions about eCampus, troubleshooting, directing faculty to needed resources, and distributing information to faculty about eCampus services.

Dr. Boone's is equally proficient in the areas of research and service. Over the past four years she has authored/co-authored numerous refereed journal articles, refereed presentations, and invited presentations. She is involved in a number of state and



national service activities including the West Virginia AgrAbility Project Steering Committee and the West Virginia Farm Bureau's Agriculture in the Classroom Advisory Committee.

Congratulations on this outstanding honor.

### Career in Agricultural Education *(Continued)*

nities to earn while they learn. As I look to the future I continue to be concerned about the effect of additional daily demands on a teacher's time, demands that are often created by the well-intentioned wheels of bureaucracy on the local, state and national levels. Students' supervised agricultural experience programs, the accompanying student records, and instructional supervision provided by the teacher, must continue to have a high priority in the agricultural education program.

☺ Created in December 1984, the West Virginia FFA Foundation is a tremendous success story that features a unique organizational structure, based totally on volunteer support. As most are aware, donors may invest in this 501(c)(3) organization that has no administrative overhead, and rest assured that their total investment will benefit FFA members. This is rather impressive for a foundation managing a \$400,000 investment fund. With the funds growth we have experienced a significant expansion in the number of scholarships and other cash incentives provided to FFA members.

☺ Recruitment and program promotion must be a top priority in the future. I have never forgotten a powerful comment made by a retired vocational administrator and former agriculture teacher, Raymon Cunningham – "Generally speaking, people are down on what they're not up on." My experience over the years certainly validates his theory. I applaud those teachers who regularly utilize sources such as the news media, their advisory committee and/or booster group to promote their students' success/program and educate the public.

☺ The assessment process has changed over the years, and will continue to experience change. In this age of accountability it will be essential for our profession to continue to be involved and have ownership in this process.

THE BOTTOM LINE — Our program stands tall (curriculum, FFA, SAE, facilities, financial support, business partners, community support, etc.) compared to others, and I applaud agriculture teachers and support staff for their efforts. All stakehold-

ers can take great pride in our students' success.

I have often noted that my job is like a vacation at the expense of the West Virginia taxpayer. It has been such because it has always been challenging, exciting and fun-working with the greatest program and student organization in the country, and our nation's finest educators-West Virginia agriculture teachers. God has truly blessed the Michael family.

On March 1, 2007, I launched into an exciting new adventure as Director of Governmental Affairs for the WV Farm Bureau. As I look to the future I can assure our profession I will remain committed to the program and student organization that continue to be so dear to my heart. In this exciting world filled with challenge and opportunity, I would remind all to be sure to "Take a little time to do, whatever makes a happy you." Take care my friends, God bless you and your loved ones, and KEEP SMILING.

# Guest Editorial: How do You Sleep at Night?

by Jeremy Greene

That was the question posed to me by one of my colleagues regarding the rejection of a state proficiency award application at the annual governing body meeting and degree review at Cedar Lakes at the end of March. I spent a significant portion of my time at the meeting defending the evaluations that I and other instructors had for two particular applications. In the time that has passed since, I have become utterly disgusted with what transpired.

It has always been my understanding that as agriculture instructors and FFA advisors it is our responsibility to make tough, yet thoughtful decisions regarding students and their achievements. To me that involves awarding students for success and offering constructive criticisms for areas where students need to improve their performance; and in many cases, that can result in disappointing students by turning them away for awards and recognition. However, it would appear that my philosophy is significantly different than that of others in this profession.

From what I learned from my experience, it is the opinion of other instructors in the state that any individual that writes anything in the space provided on an application and has no competition, the individual in question should be rewarded with a first or second place ranking and the monetary reward that goes along with it. This idea goes against everything that I have ever been taught by my co-workers, my college professors, my parents... anyone who taught me about ethics and education.

I was taught that in order to receive recognition and rewards for success; success should be of the level at which merit should be offered; not simply because no one else

applied, or because the money is available regardless of quality, or that the application and supporting materials can be edited before they go on to the next level, or because we feel sympathy for the individual that is applying. All of these reasons were suggested to me and others as reasons these applications should be accepted and rewarded.

At what point do we say to ourselves that reward for mediocrity is not acceptable? When do we start demanding more? If we are going to continue to compensate individuals who do not take the time to complete the necessary requirements, I am going to write a generic state proficiency application for all of my students, and they can fill in the appropriate blanks for their particular SAE. It will take them about five minutes and they can each place and receive money. Sounds like a great idea! Except that I was taught that this would be a disservice to my students. Because it is our job to teach students to learn the importance and value of working hard to achieve recognition, to teach them the significance of editing their work, to teach them that keeping good records has rewards, and to teach them that a sympathy vote is nothing more than a lack of confidence in a perfectly competent and capable individual.

I am of the opinion that we should not be omitting applications for every problem that is present; however, we must put a line in the sand and be able to say that this individual does or does not qualify. During the course of the review process, applications from Jefferson were shown to me with issues that merited disqualification. I told those individuals to take that initiative if they saw fit.

I have confidence and support for the instructors in the state of West Virginia without question. However it is apparent to me that some of my colleagues do not have the same confidence in me. Both of the applications that I (and another instructor) rejected were re-evaluated by others, and one was given a second place rating by those individuals. I have no issue whatsoever with individuals asking for reasoning behind decisions that are made in these processes, but I am insulted that my judgments are challenged and disregarded when someone has a personal issue with my decision. I even told this individual to put it before the group and have them decide, but instead they hand picked a few to change the judgment.

I must say that having this occur is rather disheartening to my motivation in offering my time and effort to participate in this and other judging functions. Nonetheless, I will continue to participate, looking forward to the gathering where we will judge for the high standards for which the FFA organization was established. I encourage all of the agriculture teachers throughout the state of West Virginia to do the same.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this editorial are not necessarily the opinions of other teachers with whom I judged applications at the 2007 West Virginia Governing Body Meeting.

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

## 2007 Stockman's Contest Results

1. Gilmer County FFA Gold	1477	1. Jese Vance	Clay Team 3	405
2. Ripley FFA Team 2	1421	2. Sara Mohr	Gilmer County FFA Gold	403
3. Braxton Team 1	1411	3. Cody Grogg	Gilmer County FFA Gold	375
4. Clay Team 3	1407	4. Derek Harpold	Ripley FFA Team 2	373
5. Clay Team 2	1382	5. Kyle Harpold	Ripley FFA Team 2	372
6. Mineral County Team 1	1331	6. Brent Ebert	Mineral County Team 1	367
7. Braxton Team 2	1317	7. Jarrod Dawson	Clay Team 2	366
8. Mason County 4-H Team A	1309	8. Tiffany Burroughs	Braxton Team 1	365
9. Grant County 4-H Team A	1302	9. Melissa Cole	Gilmer County FFA Gold	365
10. Upshur County FFA Team A	1288	10. Nicholas Biliter	Tyler County 4-H Team 2	364

## ***Roy Harper Wins Arch Coal Teacher Achievement Award***

Education has played an important role in Roy P. Harper's family for generations. His mother, grandparents and great-grandfather were teachers, as well as two uncles, one aunt and eight cousins. Yet it was a negative experience in high school that perhaps most influenced the kind of teacher Harper himself would become.

"To this day, I still can remember sitting in a particular class, thinking, 'What a waste of time,'" he recalls. "All we did was sit in class and goof off. I often thought of all the neat activities we could be doing and decided then that if I ever became a teacher I would make sure my classes were interesting, challenging and fun."

Today Harper received proof he'd kept that promise. He became one of only 12 teachers statewide to receive a 2007 Arch Coal Teacher Achievement Award. Steven F. Leer, Arch Coal chairman and chief executive officer, made the announcement during a presentation ceremony at the state capitol. He was accompanied by West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin; First Lady Gayle Manchin; Arch Coal President and Chief Operating Officer John Eaves; and West Virginia Education Association President Charles Delauder.

"Roy Harper and his students have grown a six-acre corn maze each of the past three years," says Leer. "That is certainly hands-on experience, but that is not all that is done. Local elementary students explore the maze, guided by his students, and then the public enjoys the maze with a Halloween Corn Maze night. He involves not just his students, but the entire community in his agriscience endeavors"

Harper teaches agriscience technology courses at Moorefield Middle School, Moorefield, W.Va. "Educators need to meet the needs of individual students," he notes. "We need to inspire, challenge, guide and help each child with love and understanding. Daily, I try to foster the love of learning, a feeling of worth, and provide oppor-

tunities for success and growth," he adds. "The student will gain knowledge, skill, independence, self-confidence and satisfaction in learning through this approach."

"Mr. Harper is truly the most dedicated teacher I had throughout my lifetime," notes Eva K. Leatherman, a former student who now attends college. "He gives every student ample attention and strives to help them thoroughly understand the class material," she adds. "Thanks to Mr. Harper, I was able to participate in numerous leadership events hosted by the FFA organization. Through these events, I gained invaluable leadership, public speaking skills and a much higher level of self-confidence. He makes all his students feel important and encourages them to pursue their goals."

Harper earned his bachelor's and master's degrees +45 hours at West Virginia University. By attending workshops in applied technologies, he helps ensure students learn from the most current educational materials. Harper received a state grant used by the school to implement the first agriscience technology lab in West Virginia. (Other grants have been used to replace or repair parts of the county fairground.) He encourages students to join the Moorefield Middle FFA Chapter, and many have won state and national awards over the past several years. Harper is the 2006 Moorefield Middle School Teacher of the Year, 2006 Teacher of the Year for Hardy County Schools, and a finalist for 2007 West Virginia Teacher of the Year. His professional affiliations include the National Young Farmer Educational Association (NYFEA) and several civic organizations. Harper and his students annually perform a number of community service projects.

In addition to recognition, award recipients receive a \$2,500 unrestricted cash prize, a distinctive trophy and a classroom plaque. The West Virginia Foundation for the Improvement of Education makes a \$1,000 award to each recipient's school, for use with at-risk students.



The teacher recognition awards are underwritten by the Arch Coal Foundation and supported in program-promotion by the West Virginia Department of Education, the West Virginia Education Association and the West Virginia Library Commission. The Arch Coal Teacher Achievement Awards is the longest running, privately sponsored teacher recognition program in the state. Nominations of the teachers are made by the public, and selection is made by a blue-ribbon panel of the teachers' peers – previous recipients of the award.

Arch Coal, Inc. is the nation's second largest coal producer. The company's core business is providing U.S. power generators with clean-burning, low-sulfur coal for electric generation. Through its national network of mines, Arch supplies the fuel for approximately 6 percent of the electricity generated in the United States. The company is listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: ACI) and maintains its corporate headquarters in St. Louis, Mo.

Information about each of the 12 recipients is posted on the Arch Coal Web site: [www.archcoal.com](http://www.archcoal.com).

*Roy completed B.S (1986) and M.S. (1991) degrees in Agricultural Education from West Virginia University and is currently teaching agricultural education at Moorefield Middle School.*

### ***2007 Career Development Events***

**4-H and FFA Dairy Cattle Contest (Jackson' Mill)**  
**WV FFA Career Development Events (Morgantown, WV)**

**Sunday, August 12, 2007**  
**September 19-21, 2007**

## Isaac Lewis Wins Arch Coal Teacher Achievement Award

As an educator, Isaac Lee Lewis makes sure what is taught in his classroom is relevant to his students' future educational and work-related pursuits. "My background helps me to bring real-life, current and meaningful learning situations into the confines of my classroom," he notes. "My greatest drawback is having time to spend with industry professionals, to remain abreast with changes."

Today, Lewis had an opportunity to spend time with a number of colleagues, yet likely didn't have time for conversation. Lewis was one of only 12 teachers statewide to receive a 2007 Arch Coal Teacher Achievement Award. Steven F. Leer, Arch Coal chairman and chief executive officer, made the announcement during a presentation ceremony at the state capitol. He was accompanied by West Virginia Governor Joe Manchin; First Lady Gayle Manchin; Arch Coal President and Chief Operating Officer John Eaves; and West Virginia Education Association President Charles Delauder.

"Isaac Lewis not only challenges his students to understand, but to apply their lessons to their daily lives," says Leer. "He pledges to teach his students in a real and meaningful way. This is just one example of how special this teacher is."

Lewis teaches animal and veterinary science, agriculture and biology courses at Hampshire High School, Romney, W.Va. He believes students have a desire to be successful, regardless of the viewpoints presented. "It is the teacher's responsibility to find their curiosity and to instigate, motivate and nourish it until the hard armor of the teenager has been shed," he notes. "When entering the classroom each day, a teacher must believe in their abilities, have an organized plan and put students first, regardless of external pressures."

"Mr. Lewis uses his personal farming background and extensive experience in

livestock-management in the classroom," notes Stephen E. Ritz, a district conservationist for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and member of the VO-AG Advisory Council at Hampshire High School. "He holds sheep-shearing schools, demonstrates ultrasound on ewes and just completed a major swine project with the W.Va. School for the Deaf and Blind, to name a few," Ritz adds. "His classes are popular because, as I have heard from the students, 'You learn something in Mr. Lewis' classroom.'"

Lewis earned an associate's degree at Potomac State College, and bachelor and master's degrees at West Virginia University. Already certified in biology, he will soon complete general science certification as well. He has been on many committees that impact the animal science industry, currently serving on the West Virginia Department of Agriculture Committee for the education and eradication of a sheep disease. Since the onset of end-of-course testing in West Virginia vocational programs, 98.2 percent of students in Hampshire's Animal Veterinary Science Program have met or exceeded state standards. In 2006, Hampshire was one of five schools awarded "exemplary status" by the State Board of Education. In February 2007, students will display their efforts to delegates and senators at the West Virginia capitol. Furthermore, the Hampshire County Future Farmers of America (FFA) was ranked among the top 300 chapters in the country, out of 7,200 nationwide. Lewis volunteers for a number of community and other school-related activities. He plans to pursue a doctorate in agricultural education.

In addition to recognition, award recipients receive a \$2,500 unrestricted cash prize, a distinctive trophy and a classroom plaque. The West Virginia Foundation for the Improvement of Education makes a \$1,000 award to each recipient's school, for use with at-risk students.



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*Isaac is currently teaching agricultural education at Hampshire High School.*

### 2007 State Equine Contest Results

1. Mineral County Technical Center	973	1. Megan Webb	Mineral County	332
2. Cabell Midland HS	944	2. Susan Clagg	Cabell Midland	332
3. Preston County HS	922	3. Alish Jenkins	Barbour County	331
4. Barbour County Technical Center	908	4. Sara Mohr	Gilmer County	324
5. Jefferson County HS	896	5. Khrystian Rosier	Mineral County	322

# *Student Teaching Reflection*

**by Joseph Hymes**

At first student teaching is like being dropped on a deserted island with only a quarter and an unreliable pay phone. You're dropped out of a helicopter and your first thought is to explore the island and take in the surroundings. During your exploration, you happen upon dangerous traps and other malignant troubles. Then you fear for your safety and remember the pay phone. You find your way back to the pay phone but you can't find your quarter. You search your pockets frantically until you find it. You put the quarter in the phone and it spits it right back out. Again, you try and try but the phone still won't take the quarter. Alas, on your last attempt it takes it and you can call for a ride.

While this situation seems to be a far cry from being an analogy of student teaching, it does have its similarities. The deserted island represents the new environment. You don't know any people so it feels as though you are alone. You envision the task as being harder than it really is and again you burden yourself with thoughts of being alone. You begin to look at it as an adventure and accept your surroundings. Things are finally beginning to work. You're learning students' names, developing discipline policies, working with your cooperating teacher and university supervisor. As you continue on your journey you begin to see the things that stand in your way. Things such as special needs, problematic behavior, time management, and extra-curricular activities are seen. You remember the pay phone which stands for the students in your class. It is your responsibility to see that they get the most benefit out of the agricultural education program. The quarter represents the lesson or knowledge that you are providing to the students. Sometimes you have to search for the right technique or motivator to get the students to take hold of that knowledge. When that pay phone finally takes the quarter you begin to feel that the trip was worth while.

My experience at Grafton High School was a great eye opener to a career that I have chosen for myself. It was my first real experi-

ence stepping into the shoes of an educator. I learned many things, faced many challenges, and took many life lessons from the experience. The experience showed me what I really enjoy about teaching and what I despise.

The first and most important lesson is to utilize your resources and never be afraid to ask questions. Others may have a vast sum of knowledge that they are willing to share but just need to be asked. My cooperating teacher understood that his role in my experience was to guide me through the experience and provide an atmosphere that was conducive to gaining skills that will help me become a better teacher.

Gaining student respect and trust will likely create an easier classroom to work with. The first class that I took over was Agriculture and Natural Resources I. Mr. Tennant had made it clear to me that he had some trouble with a few of the students in the classroom and that if I gave them an inch they would try to take a mile. I approached this class with a strong discipline approach that I upheld. The first week took some adjustment for students but they responded well and probably became the easiest class to work with. Mr. Tennant had also warned me of some discipline problems with the Greenhouse Technology 2<sup>nd</sup> period class, which was made up of mostly senior students. This was the second class that I took over. From my observations of Mr. Tennant I decided to take a similar laid back approach to this class. With these students I did not gain the desired respect and found that motivating them was a difficult task. The laid back style doesn't work for me. Things finally started looking up towards the end of my experience. I shifted to a more direct, on-task style that finally gained their respect.

It is very easy to distinguish between students who are in agriculture for the knowledge and experience and students who are there for other reasons. Most of the Agriculture and Natural Resources II and Agriscience 11 students have that desire to be involved in agri-

culture. Agriculture and Natural Resources I needed to be motivated to become involved though. For me this was the most rewarding task. Seeing students who came into agriculture with no more background than the average person excel and really enjoy the class is the best part. For awhile I struggled to accept that some students just don't want to learn, participate, or even be in school. I think that I tried my best to make it an enjoyable class for those students but felt that in the end my time was better spent working with students who needed encouragement and wanted to be there.

I try to place my thoughts and feelings on teaching into a realm that I have been part of for the last four years which is a self-driven attempt to gain knowledge through post secondary education. It is hard to relate high school education to college education. You have to approach high school teaching with different expectations of students than if they were in college. You have to find ways of motivating them into becoming better students, finding career paths, and becoming successful citizens that are much more specific than motivating college students.

My overall experience of teaching students in agricultural education was a positive one. It was a very scary experience at first but one that I gained so much from. Student teaching is what you make it. It can be an experience in which you learn more about yourself and teaching or one in which you struggle to justify your desire to be a teacher by complaining about its downfalls. What you put in is what you get out.

Student teaching is just like the deserted island. It can be a lonely, scary place or it can be a beautiful paradise where you learn who you are and what it takes to succeed. It requires that you give it your best if you are going to be successful.

*Joe completed his student teaching at Taylor County Technical Center under the supervision of Mr. Stephen Tennant.*

## *My Student Teaching Experience*

**by Billie Davis**

As I take a look back and reflect on my time as a student teacher, I am amazed to find how much I learned and exactly how much I am going to miss the students at Preston County High School. Each and every minute of it will remain with me throughout the rest of my life. Sometimes it was hard work and very tiring and at other times exciting and invigorating. I know sometimes people come

out of student teaching with a changed mind but I would have to say that my experience only inspired me to do exactly what I came to college to do and that was to teach agriculture.

Of course, I must give all this credit to my cooperating teacher, Ms. Laah Wolford, who was very supportive and helpful through-

out my stay at Preston County High. Even more credit should go to the students within the program. I was amazed to find many bright and articulate students ready to learn each and every day. I am also proud to say that I never encountered any serious discipline problems during my student teaching. The most difficult thing I dealt with was having very talkative students. I must also say that isn't ex-

*(Continued on next page)*

actly a bad thing when you're looking for feedback. This type of students will openly tell you what they think or how they feel. I think I will have a hard time finding the same quality of students that I had the opportunity to teach at Preston County High School.

In addition, I must talk about all the new experiences that I had while at Preston County High. I am a high school graduate of a single teacher program so walking into a multi-teacher program was new to me. There are three teachers at Preston High: Mrs. Wolford, my cooperating teacher; Mr. Wilson; and Mr. Carpenter. I found that multi-teacher departments function entirely different from that of a single teacher. Duties and classes are divided to give the students ample opportunities. It also has the downfall of not seeing and knowing all the students in the program like single department teachers. Another first for me was the Ham, Bacon, and Egg Show. Before my

student teaching I had only a vague idea of what it was about. Now, I know exactly what it involves and how stressful it is. Although, I had teachers jokingly tell me to go to a program without a Ham, Bacon, and Egg Show, I know why teachers devote their time and energy to this event. They do it for the same reason that I enjoyed it. It is a sense of pride in the students when you see their products sold at insanely high prices while the bidders are helping the students secure their future.

While at Preston County, I also had the opportunity to help train two judging teams: stockman's and horse. I must say that my experience is more with horses than with cattle but I helped all the same. We took 15 students to Jackson's Mill for the Stockman's competition and although we did not take home any plaques, I think we had students that tried and did their best. As for the horse judging members, I wish them the best of luck on April

28<sup>th</sup> and I expect a call telling me how well I prepared them. Preparing the team was almost solely my responsibility because of previous experience judging horses. (Editor's note: Preston County placed third in the state contest)

At last, I would like to thank those students that were cooperative during SAE visits. SAE visits turned out to be the most enjoyable part of my student teaching career, even when I got lost and ended up in Maryland and spent over three hours on back roads in Terra Alta searching for a student's house.

Finally, I would like to thank Mrs. Wolford and everyone else that helped me get to this point and gave me the opportunity that I have worked long and hard for.

*Billie completed her student teaching at Preston County High School under the supervision of Ms. Laah Wolford.*

## ***Student Teacher Reflections***

**by Jessica Harley**

Denial, failure, retribution, goals, endurance, perseverance, and finally, understanding. Such is the path that I took during the time of my student teaching. I took a path where I learned not how to teach, but how not to teach. I was in denial about what and who I faced so I found failure, and with that failure I came to consequences that forced me to set new goals. I endured tough times only to find that I persevered to receive the ultimate gift and what I sought all along.

Observing the class before hand told me very little of what I was up against. Then again, maybe I was not looking for the right things. Either way, my first goal was to challenge these students. I sought out questions that were difficult and only the most dedicated student would find the correct answer. A few students (10% maybe) were very capable of completing these tests with a high grade but I quickly saw that the others were at a loss. I previously thought these students just were not paying attention, were not trying, and did not care. Such was my denial and assumption.

My denial ended one day when I finally became comfortable enough to focus on each student as an individual. Some were not capable of spelling out the names of colors, some could not read without assistance, others could not multiply any number greater than ten times two. In this way I discovered the harsh truth that was my failure. Perhaps it all was for the best, after all the harder tests told me where the class was. It was like taking a new car out for a spin when I did not know it had a flat tire. I had failed these students.

At this phase I began my lesson plan modification. How was it possible to present the same information to students with such diverse academic level, I asked myself. Remember, some students were very capable of completing my difficult tests. So I started assignments in class that could be finished at home if more time was needed. I slowed down and spent more time on items even when the most apt in the class first appeared to be ready to move on. I started calling names of people that did not have their hand raised and I took an interest in everyone's success. Those who told me they did not read aloud well, I asked them to try anyway. I also started letting students out to go to the special education teacher for help with their assignments. In this way, I found my retribution in hopes that all would be made well.

While students were starting to understand material better, they all were not turning in their work. Imagine being in class, completing an assignment and just not turning it in. Many students failed to turn in their work for a multitude of reasons. Also, only about half of my students turned in their notebooks. As a result, I made a spreadsheet with names and assignments. An "X" meant the assignment was turned in where a blank space meant that it had not been turned in. I really feel that this served only to worry the successful students. For example an assignment was not due but some students had turned it in and had an "X." One student became highly paranoid about the assignment. The spreadsheet served as a tool for me to explain why the student

could not be permitted to have certain privileges. The concept also allowed the students to have a goal of getting all those "X"s by their name.

During the middle chunk of my student teaching it was hard to keep up with all the work. It was necessary to modify just about all lesson plans to fit each class. At least, at this point I knew my students and I could think about how well this type of lesson would work for Mary but not for Johnny. In this way, things started to get easier but I still had to endure it all.

I knew all of my work was starting to pay off when I got several students who did very little work to turn in their assignments and they were done correctly. Also, while I still feel like I was teaching for my own tests, the grades started to go up. Students were asking me for my opinion of their work and they were taking my suggestions. Did I persevere? I do not know. Why? I can't help but wonder how much further I could have taken the students who were succeeding from the beginning. While I don't think I failed them, they got more details about fewer subjects, I just feel that I could have taken those students to the moon and back with the same amount of effort. But then, maybe they can get to the moon on their own, or maybe we did make it to the moon, but I was too busy to notice. At least now I understand what it is like to be looking at the classroom from the other end.

*Jessica completed her student teaching at Liberty High School under the supervision of Mr. James Carr.*

### Important Dates

Jul 11-14	State FFA Convention	Cedar Lakes
Jul 30-Aug 1	Teachers Conference	Charleston
Aug 12	State FFA and 4-H Dairy Contest	Jackson's Mill
Sep 1	WVU Football: Western Michigan	Morgantown
Sep 8	WVU Football: at Marshall	
Sep 13	WVU Football: at Maryland	
Sep 19-21	WV Career Development Events	Morgantown
Sep 22	WVU Football: East Carolina	Morgantown

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