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FFA Collegiate Members Network for 'Career Success'

By Kelliann Blazek

With complimentary string cheese samples in hand, Brian Gunnell stood outside the Collegiate Career Expo to entice hungry collegiate FFA members.

The 2009 National FFA Collegiate Career Expo took place on Oct. 24 and featured 34 companies and organizations, ready to provide collegiate FFA members with employment opportunities.

Gunnell is the Director of Leadership & Organizational Development at Schreiber Foods Inc., a \$4 billion cheese and dairy manufacturing company based in Green Bay, Wis. The leadership and work ethic FFA members possess are qualities Gunnell looks for in potential employees.

"I've been to a lot of college career fairs across the country and the caliber of the folks we visited with here today would rival some of the best that we've seen at colleges," Gunnell said.

Schreiber Foods wasn't the only company using food as advertisement. The Kraft Foods booth boasted Nabisco snacks ranging from Oreo Sippers to Newton's Fruit Crisps.

Representatives from Kraft Foods have attended the National FFA Convention for more than 60 years. The company hands out newer products for FFA members to try and critique.

"Rather than just being here to shake hands, we're giving them something with Kraft on it," Gleason said.

The man at the front of organization efforts of the expo was Marty Tatman, the National FFA Collegiate Program Education Specialist.

"This is the best way we can connect our college students with different companies and organizations that are looking for interns, employees, or just to network with college students," Tatman.



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Tatman said 107 FFA members pre-registered for the expo. Students are encouraged to bring resumes to present to potential employers. This year the expo moved to Lucas Oil Stadium in an effort to attract collegiate FFA members that attended the Saturday morning session.

Mike Rogalsky, the National FFA Collegiate Career Success Ambassador, travels the country to educate collegiate FFA members about networking and career advancement opportunities. Rogalsky is a junior at the University of Florida and served as a Florida FFA state officer in 2006.

“The ultimate goal is to get the students to have some one-on-one time with the folks that are actually going to be doing the hiring at these companies,” Rogalsky said.

And that’s just what Emily Ries, a senior at Michigan State University, was looking for. Ries is a past Michigan FFA state officer and attended the Collegiate Career Expo this year for the second time to search for a full-time job.

Ries said the expo is a unique opportunity for students to network with many companies that acknowledge and appreciate the reputation of FFA members.

“When these employers see the blue and gold jackets, they know it’s someone they can place their confidence in,” Ries said.