



NATIONAL FFA CONVENTION
October 22-25, 2008

National FFA Organization
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NEWS RELEASE

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The 81st National FFA Convention Begins With a Bang *Members of the National FFA Band and Chorus lead the FFA Grand March* By Kelliann Blazek

INDIANAPOLIS – Serenaded by the tunes of the National FFA Band and the National FFA Chorus, hundreds of FFA members paraded to the opening session of the 81st National FFA Convention on Oct. 22.

The procession marched down Georgia Street, temporarily renamed “FFA Way” and decorated with national blue and corn gold street banners, from the Indiana Convention Center to Conseco Fieldhouse.

“It [the FFA Grand March] gives us a lot of energy and really starts things off,” said Sarah Schroeder, a member of the National FFA Band from the Clinton FFA Chapter in Missouri.

With more than 80 members representing 30 states, the band offers FFA members the opportunity to showcase their musical talents.

Kyle Letot, a member of the Hastings FFA Chapter in Michigan, is a first-year alto saxophone player. She participated in the FFA Grand March as a member of the color guard and was eager to join the procession to the opening session.

“It [the FFA Grand March] is a grand opening to show everybody that there’s a whole bunch of people involved in FFA – some of them are in band, some of them are in chorus, some are in the talent portion and others just come to show others that FFA is a big part of our country,” Kyle said.

Kyle is one of five members of the Letot family affiliated with the National FFA Band and the National FFA Chorus. Her twin sister, Dena Letot, currently plays percussion in the National FFA Band, while her older brother participated in the band two years ago.

The Letots joined the National FFA Organization after their father pursued agricultural activities as a child. Both their father and mother, friends of National FFA Band Director Joe LaJoye, are involved in national convention this year, serving as chaperones for the National FFA Chorus.

Another close friend of LaJoye, Dale Latva serves as the Assistant Director of the National FFA Band. He began his involvement with FFA nine years ago when LaJoye approached him about assisting with the band. LaJoye and Latva teach in neighboring school districts in Michigan and collaborated on numerous school band projects before working together with the National FFA Band.

LaJoye indicated the FFA Grand March not only serves as a celebration for FFA members attending national convention, but also allows non-FFA members in Indianapolis to catch the FFA spirit.

“Last year when we first did it [the FFA Grand March], we didn’t know what to expect in terms of a crowd. A lot of the merchants came out and got exposed to the FFA and a lot of the crowd started to follow us to the first session,” LaJoye said.

The FFA Grand March premiered last year after a nearly decade long hiatus. LaJoye hopes the procession will become a yearly tradition at national convention and continue to showcase the musical opportunities of FFA members.

The National FFA Organization, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America, is a national youth organization of 507,763 student members – all preparing for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture – as part of 7,439 local FFA chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. The National FFA Organization changed to its present name in 1988, in recognition of the growth and diversity of agriculture and agricultural education. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. Visit www.ffa.org for more information.

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