



NATIONAL FFA CONVENTION  
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National FFA Organization  
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## **Hee Knows No Fear**

### **Keynote speaker encourages FFA members to 'Step up' during opening session**

By Kelliann Blazek

Anticipation was high for the opening session of the 81<sup>st</sup> National FFA Convention, with an estimated total of 36,000 FFA members and guests in attendance.

Olivia Knight, a first-time convention attendee and member of the Claremore FFA Chapter in Oklahoma, attended the opening session and expressed her anticipation of the opportunities to network at the national convention. Knight's father was an active FFA member in high school and his involvement inspired her to join this year.

"I'm really looking forward to meeting a lot of new people and going to all of the things offered here, like the career show," Knight said.

Making the opening session even more memorable was the return of the laser show, which FFA members all across the nation had lobbied for over the past year. The opening session also marked the unveiling of the 2008 National FFA Convention theme song, an '80s-style rock tune promoting the convention theme, "Step Up, Stand Out."

The National FFA Officers cited the theme song and invited FFA members to step up by leading the way, lending a hand and showing their pride, and to stand out by living their values and making a difference.

Echoing their words of encouragement, keynote speaker Dana Hee inspired FFA members to face their fears and focus on achieving personal success.

Hee is well known for winning an Olympic gold medal in tae kwon do in 1988 and working as a Hollywood stuntwoman in films such as “Charlie’s Angels,” “Independence Day” and “Batman.”

“From life to the Olympics to Hollywood, I’ve found it is so easy to step up in life if you just take that one step of courage,” Hee said.

Hee overcame a difficult childhood after her parents abandoned her and her two brothers when Hee was 3 years old. After spending nine years in an orphanage, Hee shuffled between halfway houses and government shelters before living in a foster home. Her unstable childhood left her without self-confidence until she turned her life around at age 25 by adopting a positive attitude.

“The easiest way to step up in life is choosing to remain positive,” she said.

Hee admitted she is actually one of the “biggest chickens,” despite her dangerous career choice.

“The reason that I originally did it [stunt work] was to prove to myself that I could take something and do it regardless of my fears.”

Hee currently lives in New Mexico on a 15-acre organic fruit orchard and raises geese, chickens, ducks and rabbits. She became interested in agriculture as a child after visiting her uncle’s horse farm.

“I’m a city girl with a country heart,” she said.

Attending the national FFA convention for the first time this year, she indicated she was very impressed with the organization and its members.

“I think FFA is the backbone of our society. I meet a lot of people and organizations and I think the FFA has the integrity and leadership and character skills that I wish the rest of the nation had.”

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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](http://www.ffa.org) for more information.

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