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NEWS RELEASE

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Missouri Student Achieves Career Success **Derek Lowrey named American Star in Agricultural Placement**

INDIANAPOLIS—Ask Derek Lowrey to name his life-long goal and the Laredo, Mo., resident will tell you without hesitation: “To be a farmer. I love agriculture and am committed to making farming a career that is challenging, rewarding and profitable.” Lowrey grew up on his parent’s crop and beef farm and started his supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program his freshman year in high school by purchasing and backgrounding feeder heifers. When neighbors turned ill and needed help running their dairy farm, Lowrey stepped in. Now, his act of kindness and hard work has paid off and could earn him top honors.

The National FFA Organization has named 20-year-old Lowrey the 2008 American Star in Agricultural Placement.

Each year at the national FFA convention, 16 national finalists (four per award) vie for the organization’s top awards: American Star Farmer, American Star in Agribusiness, American Star in Agricultural Placement and American Star in Agriscience. These awards honor students who have developed outstanding agricultural skills and competencies through their career development programs; demonstrated outstanding management skills; earned the American FFA Degree – the organization’s highest level of accomplishment; and met other agricultural education, scholastic and leadership requirements. Each finalist was interviewed by a panel of judges, who ultimately named the top candidate in each area. The winner was announced in an onstage convention ceremony and received a plaque

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and an award of \$4,000. The runners'-up also received plaques and \$2,000 each.

In April 2003, Lowrey began working for Foster/Mack Dairy, a Grade A, 55-head Holstein dairy farm in rural Grundy County, to help the farm's owners who were battling cancer. His many duties included feeding cattle and calves, assisting with tillage work and raking and stacking hay. He soon advanced to working with the farm's milking operation, which eventually led to his current position as farm manager and his work on everything from maintaining the silage pit to replacing tractor clutches and cutting, baling and storing alfalfa and grass hay.

When he's not working on the dairy farm, Lowrey is receiving his Associate in Applied Science in agriculture and natural resources at North Central Missouri College in Trenton, Mo. He also works on his own custom-farming enterprise planting and combining soybeans, putting up hay and applying fertilizer. He has expanded his beef backgrounding operation to 60 head of heifers per year. In addition, he raises corn, soybeans, wheat, oats and hay in cooperation with his brother. In his spare time, Lowrey restores antique tractors; he has nearly 25 in his collection. Next fall, he will attend Northwest Missouri State University and major in agronomy. Until then, he continues to work for the Macks. He hopes to eventually buy the Mack farm and convert it into a beef and row crop operation.

Lowrey is the son of David and Melissa Lowrey and is a member of the Trenton FFA, where his advisor is Steven Rogers.

His SAE led him to apply for and earn the American FFA Degree, in which a student must earn and invest \$7,500 or have earned and productively invested at least \$1,500 and worked 2,250 hours in excess of scheduled class time.

An SAE program is one of three components that make up the agricultural education program. By combining the SAE career entrepreneurship or job placement component with classroom instruction from agricultural education instructors and leadership development from the FFA, students like Lowrey are able to make a positive impact on their own and others' lives.

Awards and recognition for Stars Over America finalists are made possible by the generous support of individual contributors to the National FFA Foundation.

The National FFA Organization, formerly known as the Future Farmers of America,

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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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