



## Inspiring enthusiasm

by Geri Kamenz, President  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture

We're regularly inspired to work harder for Ontario agriculture by the enthusiastic young people we see all fired up for the industry. While they may not all members of the Junior Farmers' Association of Ontario, many are, and that group can manufacture enthusiasm – at one time their motto was 'Act enthusiastic, and you'll be enthusiastic.'

I recently attended the annual provincial spring meeting of Junior Farmers in Stratford and experienced their contagious zest for life. That's a spirit farmers have to have to do their best at everything they tackle – everything from raising a family to raising livestock, planting crops and even attending meetings to plan for their future. Life can become tedious and difficult if there's no enthusiasm.

Junior Farmers have been creating and delivering enthusiasm for decades in Ontario. On a regular basis they export their skills and

inspiring attitudes when they travel to other parts of the world on exchange visits.

Self help and community betterment have long been the goals of Junior Farmers. The clubs they have formed across the province have fostered hundreds of community betterment and development projects – everything from community parks to cleaning up public spaces and grooming roadsides.

These energetic young people place a lot of emphasis on improving their own lives too – competing in sporting events, staging drama and public speaking competitions, and getting involved in debating workshops – all in preparation for their futures.

In recent years the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has provided the venue for the Young Farmers' Forum. This brings the young people to OFA's convention to observe and participate in

discussions and development of farm policy. From this stage, they move on to the national level where they experience the management and communications skills of fellow young farmers from across Canada.

The networks of young farmers that have been created in this manner have served agriculture well. Over the decades, all Ontario farm organizations have benefitted from the leadership skills learned by Junior Farmers. A lot of them have become community minded and have sought municipal council positions, some even getting involved in provincial and federal politics.

Others have dedicated their talents and enthusiasm to bettering agriculture – some as farm organization leaders, some in the service industries that keep agriculture operating.

Today's farm leaders rarely have the benefit of time to look far ahead for what the industry needs to be doing. They are too occupied dealing with the day-to-day issues. We need to recognize the potential of the Junior Farmers, and encourage them to look fur-

ther to the future at what the industry needs and the best ways of accomplishing those objectives.

Today's farm leaders need to become better listeners and pay attention when the next generation of farmers talk about their dreams and expectations for the industry.

Agriculture in Ontario has a tremendous future and an inspired and ambitious generation anxious to get involved. All farmers need to recognize the future we have and the future farmers who are geared up and ready to make it work. Let's put all minds, young and old, together and make it work!

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