

# 2011 AFBF State Farm Bureau Awards Program

State Name: **Ohio**

Program Area: **Leadership Development**

## Member Involvement:

Developing, refining, and delivering leadership skills are important components of each Ohio Farm Bureau program. Leadership training is provided to both staff and volunteer members in all program areas. Potential volunteer leaders are often first identified by their involvement in the historic **Advisory Council program** or from their efforts serving on county action teams. Advisory Councils are the foundation of OFBF's grassroots approach to policy-making and problem-solving. Councils are friends and neighbors that meet monthly for social activities and respond to business and policy topics affecting agriculture and their community. Currently there are **423 Advisory Councils** made up of **3,384 members** meeting across the state of Ohio.

This program serves as a pool for potential action team leaders and board members. In addition, potential volunteer leaders are encouraged to participate in our **Youth and Young Agricultural Professionals programs**, which encompass four leadership development conferences with personal follow-up with attendees at the local level as well as engagement via social media. Ohio Farm Bureau collaborated with **FFA, 4-H and other agricultural youth**, providing education in **policy development, agricultural advocacy and social media, and leadership** workshops. The **Young Agricultural Professionals** leadership events focus on agricultural advocacy and provided spokesperson training and materials to all **451 participants**. The **AgriPOWER Institute** identifies and helps young leaders gain influence over public policy issues that impact their businesses and are equipped to serve as advocates for the farming industry and strengthen future Farm Bureau leaders. **Twenty individuals were selected to engage in seven, multi-day training sessions**. Participants engaged high-level government officials, activists, media insiders and farm leaders on pressing local, state and national issues. Among the topics were government spending, regulations, the environment, animal welfare, international trade, state education reform and public relations. They had an opportunity to practice what they had learned on a working trip to Washington, D.C. to lobby legislators. Prior to graduation, participants developed goals for utilizing their training to effectively impact public policy.



## Communications:

At the 2011 OFBF Annual Meeting, three hundred and thirty nine county delegates determined policy direction and elect members for the state board; the state board develops goals for the program year. State board committees and staff develop and coordinate communicating a unified plan of action to the counties. Four county board Presidents are invited to each state board meeting to help foster better communication between the state and county Farm Bureaus. Field staff presents a **training module each month** to county board members.



This training helps newly elected and returning board members understand their roles and responsibilities. County board Presidents attend one of seven regional **Presidents Roundtables** each fall. County Farm Bureau board officers get **one-on-one and ongoing training from OFBF field staff**. **Three hundred and seventeen** volunteer team leaders and county presidents attended OFBF's **annual two day Leadership Conference** where they received extensive training on leadership skills as well as specific training in their program area. Ohio Farm Bureau's **Leadership Buffet** provides volunteer leaders and members with opportunities to strengthen their leadership, teamwork and personal development skills, knowledge of Farm Bureau and the agriculture industry, and to empower volunteers to be more effective leaders and communicators in Ohio Farm Bureau and their communities. **Ninety Five Leadership Buffet workshops** provided leadership training for **5,029 individuals**. A **two-day Membership College** trains all of OFBF field staff on conducting successful membership campaigns. Field staff members with one year or less of field experience receive **monthly training sessions** to build effectiveness in their field duties. Ohio Farm Bureau sponsored additional leadership development workshops for Young Agricultural Professionals including participating in a **Disney Institute workshop, "Backstage Safari"** to help them learn techniques to better communicate with consumers. All OFBF staff participated in the program "Start With Why", and all county office administrators participated in "Customer Relations and Professionalism". **Seventeen staff and six county presidents attended the 2011 AFBF convention** in Atlanta. As a part of performance evaluations, staff members are encouraged to attend other seminars, conferences, and also additional sessions conducted by the American Farm Bureau Federation.

## Planning:

The OFBF State Board of Trustees began an extensive examination of leadership development and succession planning within the organization. Using the books, “Start with Why”, and “Race for Relevance”, OFBF has begun evaluating our effectiveness in terms of governance, equipping staff and volunteers with focused leadership skills, resource management, examining our member market and technology. A Leadership Engagement Team was created to facilitate this process. The process includes restructuring training opportunities including our Leadership Conference, Presidents Roundtables, Regional Cabinet meetings and the state Annual Meeting. **OFBF’s annual budgets and program area priorities are set to reflect the organization’s commitment to achieving these goals/objectives.**

Every fall a committee of staff members meets to plan the **Leadership Conference** and set goals for that year’s leadership development efforts. This committee lays out a Leadership Development Plan centered on our Leadership Conference, Area Volunteer Leadership (Regional) Cabinet meetings, and the state annual meeting. Every training opportunity is used to provide information and enhance the skills needed to help the organization, through the volunteers, achieve its short and long-range goals. Each year a theme is developed to help create continuity for all leadership development events. A very effective and **comprehensive incentive program** is in place that gives counties an opportunity to earn money for their program areas **based upon their involvement in leadership development** activities on the state, regional and local level. All of these objectives were designed to help the counties be more effective in carrying out county policies, state policies and national policies. These goals also served to **develop the leadership volunteers’ skills**, enabling them to become more **effective local community leaders or elected officials**.

A refocusing of our **Young Agricultural Professionals** programs led us to strategize ways to **increase college student participation**. In our first year of efforts, **OFBF achievements: won the AFBF Collegiate Discussion Meet**, participated in a collegiate tour of soybean facilities and factories, provided training at the Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow national conference at Ohio State University, and provided Early Field Experience training for agricultural education majors.

## Improvement over previous year:

The program year kicked off with **three hundred and seventeen volunteers attending the Leadership Conference**. When policies are being worked on and carried out, members benefit from the improvement in their community, state and industry. All of OFBF’s leadership



development efforts led to more volunteer involvement in local and state activities. These **improvements are reflected in the growing numbers** highlighted in the results section below. The testimony to improved county and state programs can be seen in the results section where **OFBF consistently met objectives related to the “Indicators of Success”**. **Fifty-two county Farm Bureaus have earned achievement awards for excellence in meeting program objectives. Forty-eight Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards were presented for outstanding programs and the top five overall county efforts were presented the prestigious Presidents Award.**

## Results:

Results are measured on the degree to which progress is made in each of the pre-established **“Indicators of Success:” Strong Relationships, A Viable Future for Agriculture, A Strong Organization, and A Balanced Ecology**. The theme of the 2010 Leadership Conference was **“I Am Farm Bureau”** and centered on building the confidence of members to share agricultural and organizational messages with consumers.

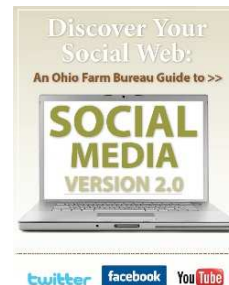


A major emphasis was placed on developing **Strong Relationships** as an indicator of success. Eighty county Farm Bureau presidents and spokesperson’s went to Washington D.C. to learn and develop their skills of political influence. **Thirty-six young farmers** and staff participated in a **leadership development trip to Washington, D.C.**: Ohio Farm Bureau also invites the **outgoing Ohio FFA State President** to attend the trip to assist in their grooming in becoming a national FFA officer. A greater collaboration with **Ohio Cattlemen’s BEST** youth program, **FFA state officers/camp** participants and **4-H ambassadors** and **Annie’s Project** (an extension program for business women in agriculture) in leadership development and involvement in youth and Young Agricultural Professionals programs continues to forge stronger industry bonds. Ohio Farm Bureau also provided **sponsorship of FFA and 4-H Leadership Camps** as well as lending staff to provide leadership workshop training.

The Ohio Farm Bureau and Nationwide sponsored **“Land and Living – Agriculture: Your Link to Life”** building at the Ohio State Fair reached an estimated **350,000** visitors and was staffed by **50 staff, twenty seven college-student “ambassadors” and three interns**. Live broadcasts were sent from our building by **Fox News (national)** and several local television stations.

Livestock and agriculture “**agvocay**” took center stage this year with outreach and education efforts as a central theme to many events and activities. Social media played a large role in member communication and outreach. **Three hands-on social media training workshops** were created to teach members the value of using social media and branding to educate consumers. OFBF sponsored **nineteen social media workshops** training over **350** members, and provided **an additional 21 presentations about social media** to approximately **1,400 other interested members, farm and community organizations**.

Success in using Facebook, Twitter, Skype and YouTube to allow members to speak up on agriculture issues helped members embrace the next steps in developing their own social media outreach and confidence in teaching consumers about agriculture and Farm Bureau. For the second consecutive year, **OFBF’s social media was named best in the nation** by American Farm Bureau. On the heels of its Guide to Social Media, the OFBF social media team published a 45-page guide to creating, managing and maintaining a Facebook Business Page, entitled “Discover Your Social Brand” which was specifically developed to help county Farm Bureaus and Farm Bureau members establish an effective business presence on Facebook. OFBF used **distance learning** to provide **social media training** for local and state OFBF staff. A seven-session program using live presentations and **Ustream.tv** provided training on video editing skills and using smart phones to create social media content. OFBF also began using QR codes in publications and at events to allow smart phone users access to added content and rewards for interacting with the organization.



County Farm Bureaus are grasping **the far-reaching benefits** of innovatively using social media to tell their story. After a day and half training by OFBF staff, Marion County farmers created a social media-only project known as “**Follow Farming**” which **incorporates a blog, Facebook page, Twitter account and YouTube channel** to tell the story of one year in the life of a grain farmer in Ohio. Marion County farmers have quickly adopted **video-blogging** through their smart phones as a main component of the project. Through the first six months of the project, Follow Farming’s Facebook posts have been viewed more than **90,000 times**; they are already planning next year’s project, which will potentially be a year in the life of an Ohio dairy farmer.

The “**My Ohio Agriculture – What’s Our Connection**” encouraged members, 4-H and FFA members to talk about their farm experiences and serve as consumer educators by using social media and video technologies. **Young Agricultural Professionals contests**, (Excellence in Agriculture, Discussion Meet and Ohio’s version of the YF & R Achievement Award), also required contestants to create an original “**What’s Your Farm Story?**” video in which contestants shared their passion for agriculture and Farm Bureau. The videos are shared on YouTube and both state and local Farm Bureau web sites.



The **Center for Food and Animal Issues, (CFAI)**, developed the “**Agricultural Spokesperson**” program, a comprehensive program that provides volunteer leaders with communication skills. Members learned public speaking and persuasion skills, how to conduct media interviews, and how to use social media such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook to share the story of agriculture. The **program provides ongoing training and extensive follow-up with members over the course of the year**.

The following efforts focused on the “**Balanced Ecology**” indicator of success in OFBF’s vision. Reaching out and communicating with community leaders is vital to encouraging the continued acceptance of agriculture in local communities. Finding ways to engage local decision makers and leaders in discussions about the importance of agriculture and agricultural practices ensures that agriculture’s priority issues receive the attention they deserve. The indicator of success, “**A Viable Future for Agriculture**”, was addressed by **promoting the agbioresource industry a major OFBF goal this past year**. OFBF took a leadership role in working with the **Ohio Bioproducts Innovation Center** to link producers, agribusiness and Bioproducts developers to pursue funding for an Ohio-based agbioresource research facility and refinery. Ohio Farm Bureau sponsored **130** meetings reaching an estimated **17,320 individuals to provide training and information on agbioresources, renewable energy and property issues**. To **prepare members to testify on energy matters**, OFBF conducted **four** meetings in which **64** members received **issue and spokesperson training**.

Creating a **Viable Future for Agriculture was a high priority** for OFBF: **thirteen** OFBF members serve on the AFBF commodity advisory committees and **one hundred fifty seven** OFBF volunteers served on **seven commodity advisory teams** based on rural development, equine, specialty crops, feed grains, livestock and natural resources. **Two Ohio county Farm Bureaus** received recognition by AFBF for innovative new program ideas in this year’s **County Activities of Excellence** program. **Fifteen counties** have applied for this year’s award.

## Presidents Award

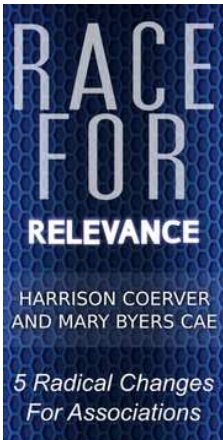
### Innovations: (Innovation, uniqueness, and new uses of resources – volunteer and financial)

Changing rural demographics, increased economic pressure, and many other factors have led to a new paradigm in volunteer engagement in many organizations including Farm Bureau. People are becoming more selective in where they get involved and how much time they are willing to commit to volunteer activities. They have shown that they are still passionate about causes that relate to them and have an impact on their quality of life. The Ohio Farm Bureau is keenly aware of this new environment we are operating in and chose to take a proactive approach to understanding and adapting to this new reality. Early in 2010, the OFBF Board of Directors appointed a **Leadership Development Committee** that was given direction to look at ways to identify current leaders and leadership prospects, improve the skills of current leaders and to develop better leaders and leadership opportunities across the state. They narrowed down the key areas of developing leadership into three components: defining, facilitating and enhancing leadership training.



One of the first steps to moving forward on this effort was to effectively use technology to **identify our current leadership base** across the state by **developing a leadership inventory** in our statewide database system. A focused effort was undertaken to make sure that all leadership activities for members over at least the past ten years were recorded in their membership record. This tracking would allow us to identify who had served in the past, determine if they were still actively involved and what possible future leadership opportunities they would be prepared to pursue. At the same time, state board members began engaging in individual and collective succession planning. They understood that the process needs to be long term and create a culture of developing and preparing candidates and a pool of potential leaders who are prepared to contribute. The board also began a focused effort to strengthen relationships with other agriculture organizations across the state by implementing a **commodity group liaison program**. State board members were assigned to different commodity groups and given the charge to: Be knowledgeable about the commodity and their issues; team with OFBF staff to share information; be a member of the commodity group, if appropriate; attend the group's annual function; and participate in the groups significant events. The goals of this effort were to promote unity in the agriculture industry and expand the potential of our commodity advisory teams.

The leadership development committee understood that **it was essential to the future success and strength of OFBF to surface, recruit, train, and develop new board members and volunteer leaders on a continual basis**. To facilitate the long-term focus and sustainability needed for this task a new staff team formed to address the critical need of leadership development. Early in 2011, the **Leadership Engagement Team** made up of five people from various departments was brought together to begin working under the direct involvement of the Executive Vice President. The task of making OFBF a more volunteer friendly and effective organization called for leadership from the top levels of the board and management so that everyone knew that change was essential for future success. The group began by researching resources that were available related to change and the future of association work. The book **“Race for Relevance”** written by Harrison Coerver and Mary Byers proved to be an invaluable resource in helping the organization understand how the changing world was changing the volunteer model needed to remain relevant. In the author's words, “This is a book about change. Radical change. Whether you are a paid association professional or a volunteer leader, you probably have noticed that today's association model, which was created more than 100 years ago, isn't nearly as effective as it once was”. These are the five radical changes that the new leadership engagement team began to address: Review and make recommendations to the governance model and committee operations on the state and county level; plan training to empower and enhance staff expertise; rigorously define the member base the organization needed to focus time and resources on; develop processes to rationalize current programs and services (should they stay or go?); identify the technology needed to make volunteers and their work more effective.



The scope of this effort clearly dictates that sustainable and lasting change will take three to five years to have major impacts on the organization. However, the early response and tangible results are very promising. A comprehensive plan of work is already in place that includes an all-encompassing training plan that includes some element of training and leadership identification at every major OFBF event scheduled over the next year. Co-author of the book “Race for Relevance” is making two trips to Ohio in late 2011 to work with staff groups and to present several workshops at our state annual meeting as we put in place radical changes designed to make a more volunteer friendly and effective organization for years to come.