

Local Young Leaders Participate at State Levels



Warren-Henderson member Gayle Baker was recently named the District 8 Representative on the IFB State Young Leader Committee. Gayle resides outside Berwick in Warren County and works as an agricultural engineer for Maurer-Stutz, Inc. in Peoria, IL. She focuses on permitting and design work for livestock housing and waste storage and also assists with developing and implementing nutrient management plans. Prior to that, she worked as an engineer for USDA-NRCS for four years designing soil and water conservation practices in eastern Illinois.

An active W-HFB member throughout the last five years, the 2010 Iowa State alum states, “This is a great opportunity to grow personally as a leader and as an agriculture professional. I am looking forward to interacting with young leaders across the state and developing working relationships among District 8 Young Leaders. The past year of cancellations and inability to gather has been hard on all of us. I am excited to brainstorm ways we can continue to talk about Farm Bureau policies and issues as we head toward what we hope is a sense of normalcy.”

Gayle will take over the two-year term District 8 representative role from Drew DeSutter of Knox County. Drew is a full-time row crop farmer and began beef production on the farm in 2018. Drew was elected chairman of the Illinois Farm Bureau State Young Leader Committee in December 2019. Many thanks go out to Drew for his support of IFB and the Young Leaders Program.

In other IFB Young Leader news, Alex Mahrenholz of Lawrence County was named the 2020 Young Leader Discussion Meet winner at the Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) Young Leader Discussion Meet, held virtually on Saturday, December 12th.

In addition to receiving a trophy, Mahrenholz will receive a John Deere riding lawn mower and \$2,500 cash, courtesy of COUNTRY® Financial and Illinois Farm Bureau. Mahrenholz will go on to represent Illinois in the national Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet, which will be part of the virtual American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention in January.

The IFB Discussion Meet judges contestants’ ability to manage a small group discussion. Each contestant gives an opening statement. Participants exchange facts and insights on a pre-determined topic. Judges award points based on how well participants work with one another, how well they express themselves and on their knowledge of the topic.

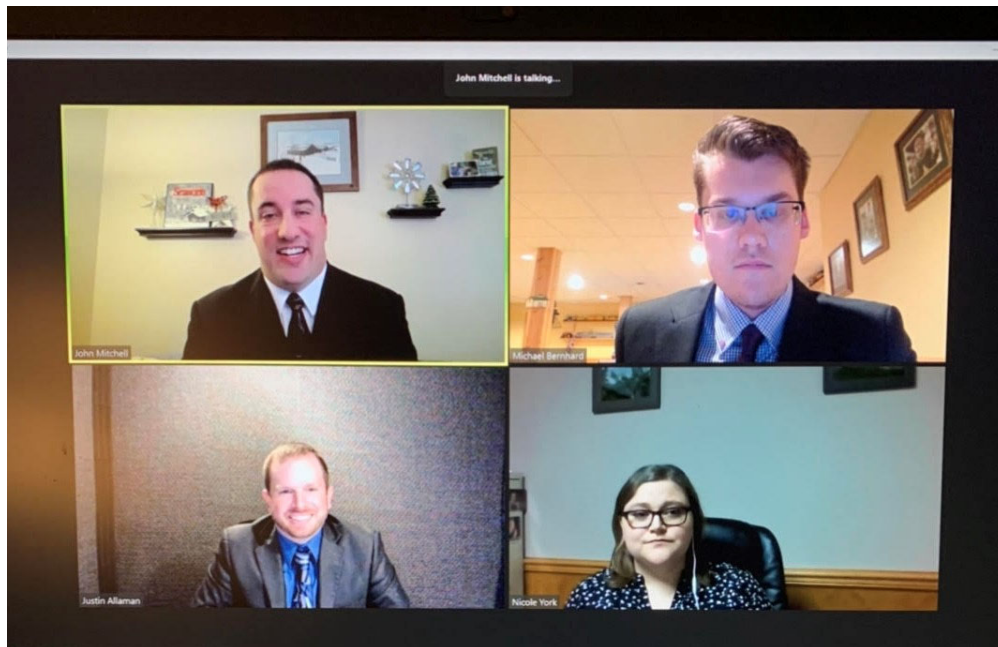
Topics for the 2020 Discussion Meet included insights and ideas on how the agriculture industry can work to enhance existing and establish new and diverse foreign trading partners; investment and policy initiatives can provide reliable broadband access to farmers and rural America; tools and production practices that can be engaged to reduce climate and weather risks; solutions to enhance the vibrancy and economic sustainability of agriculture and rural communities; and how farmers can ensure a clear understanding of the risks and rewards of big data and smart farming.

Twelve district winners vied for the title of state winner during the virtual event, including Warren-Henderson member Justin Allaman. Justin, who resides outside Kirkwood in Henderson County, noted, “Every year for the Young Leader discussion meet they come up with issues that are currently facing agriculture. Participating in the meet taught me a lot not just about the issues at hand, but also how Farm Bureau plays a role in being part of the solution. I look forward to participating at the district level again next year.” This was the first year of participation for Justin, who farms with his family and sells seed for Heritage Ag Solutions.

IFB promotes and sponsors the Discussion Meet with the goals of developing young peoples' leadership and communication skills on behalf of agriculture and of working together and reaching consensus on how to deal with current issues in agriculture.



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Justin Allaman, bottom left, took part in the (virtual) IFB Young Leader State Discussion Meet on December 12th.