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Oregon’s Freeborn wins 2nd place in National Farm Bureau Discussion Meet

PHOTO: Oregon’s Jenny Freeborn was the runner-up in the National Young Farmers & Ranchers Discussion Meet, which took place at the 2018 American Farm Bureau Convention in Nashville. Her second-place prize is a Case IH Farmall 50A tractor.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Oregon’s Jenny Freeborn, chair of Oregon Farm Bureau’s (OFB) Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Committee, was the second-place winner in the National YF&R Discussion Meet, which took place at the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 2018 Annual Convention & IDEAg Trade Show in Nashville.

“Making the Final Four of this competition was literally a dream come true from me. It’s something I’ve wanted to do since I was 15 years old and participated in an FFA practice discussion meet,” said Freeborn. “In 2009, I was in the audience watching the Final Four round in Seattle, and I said to myself, ‘I’m going to be on that stage
someday.’ And yet at the same time, I never thought it would actually happen. When my name was announced for the Final Four, that was both the most shocking and proudest moment of my life.”

![Photo of Jenny Freeborn](image)

PHOTO: Jenny Freeborn is chair of the Oregon Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee. In December Freeborn won the state Discussion Meet, which earned her the chance to compete at the national level.

[[Watch a video of the Final Four round here!]]

“Throughout the competition I wore a bracelet that a Polk County Farm Bureau board member gave me. It says, ‘Admire someone else’s beauty without questioning your own.’ That quote was so pertinent, because I was surrounded by incredible, awe-inspiring individuals who had accomplished so much in their lives — and it’s hard for me to place myself among that level of peers. It reminded me not to doubt myself or question my own skills and abilities, that I deserved to be there. I could be in awe of those amazing young farmers and still be one of them,” said Freeborn.

In December, Freeborn was elected as chair of the OFB Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee, a group within Farm Bureau for members between the ages of 16 and 35. Her primary goal as chair is to continue growing the program and getting more young leaders involved and excited about the future of Oregon agriculture.

Freeborn hails from a farm family based in Rickreall with deep roots in Farm Bureau. Her father, Dean Freeborn, is a member of the Oregon Farm Bureau board of directors. Her sister, Kathy Hadley, also served as YF&R chair and made it to the Sweet 16 round of the National YF&R Discussion Meet in 2016. Freeborn credits her sister Kathy for helping her prepare and stay focused throughout the intense competition.

“The night before the Final Four round, I only slept for a little over two hours. I woke up at 3 a.m. and my brain would not shut off. Taking my sister’s advice, I tried to keep my mind off of the competition. At that moment, she just happened to text me. From that point on, which was 1 a.m. in Oregon, she stayed up with me the entire night, texting and keeping my mind relaxed and focused. I could not have done made it to the Final Four, or through the contest, without her help, love, and support, and my parents’
lifelong dedication to helping me succeed and participate in Farm Bureau,” said Freeborn.

As runner-up, Freeborn will receive a Case IH Farmall 50A tractor, courtesy of Case IH.

The Discussion Meet simulates a committee meeting in which active discussion and participation are expected. Participants come from all over the country and are evaluated on their ability to exchange ideas and information on a predetermined topic, and come up with possible solutions using the tools and programs that Farm Bureau offers. The selected topic is not announced until the end of the prior round, sometimes giving competitors only an hour or two for last-minute preparations.

In Freeborn’s four rounds of competition, the topics of discussion were:

• Round 1 topic: With a growing demand for US farm products abroad, how can agriculture overcome public skepticism of foreign trade to negotiate new trade agreements and open new world markets?

• Round 2 topic: How can Farm Bureau help members with increasing legal and regulatory obstacles so they can focus on farming and ranching?

• Sweet 16 round topic: How can farmers and ranchers maintain their buying power with the continued trend of input supplier and provider consolidations?

• Final Four round topic: Farmers are a shrinking percentage of the population. How can Farm Bureau help first-generation farmers and ranchers get started in agriculture?

For more information about Farm Bureau and OFB’s Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee, visit www.oregonfb.org. If you would like more information about the contest or how to get involved in other YF&R events, please e-mail yfr@oregonfb.org.

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* Note to Editors: “Farm Bureau” is a registered trademark; please capitalize in all cases.

The state’s largest general farm organization, Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is a grassroots, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing the interests of the state’s farmers and ranchers in the public and policymaking arenas. First established in Oregon in 1919, Farm Bureau is organized in all 36 counties and has nearly 7,000 member families professionally engaged in agriculture.

Oregon Farm Bureau President Barry Bushue is a third-generation farmer raising pumpkins, u-pick produce, and flowering baskets at a nearly century-old farm near Boring, Oregon. He is OFB’s 15th president.