

INSIGHT

*Celebrating FFA Week  
Jackie Mundt, Pratt  
County farmer and  
rancher*

Every year since 1948, FFA members, agriculture teachers, alumni and supporters have come together to celebrate National FFA Week. The tradition is held during the week of Feb. 22, in honor of George Washington's birthday — a fitting tribute to a leader who valued agriculture and innovation.

For many local chapters, FFA Week carries the same excitement as homecoming. There are dress-up days, special events like donkey basketball or Drive Your Tractor to School Day, and plenty of friendly competition. More than 20 years later, I still smile when I think about organizing "FFA Olympics," visiting elementary classrooms in my blue corduroy jacket and the countless hours we poured into making the

week memorable at my high school.

For state and national officers, however, FFA Week looks a little different. Their schedules are typically packed with chapter visits, media interviews, workshops and trips to state capitols or meetings with supporters. During my year as a national officer, most of my teammates were dispatched across the country with back-to-back appearances, inspiring members and celebrating alongside local chapters.

One teammate, Emily, and I had a very different experience.

We began the week helping with an appreciation breakfast for National FFA staff hosted by local chapters. Then we flew to Washington, D.C., for legislative and agency visits to promote FFA. What we didn't anticipate was a snowstorm — every single night.

Each day, we navigated

nearly a foot of fresh snow in high heels, making our way to meetings on Capitol Hill and at federal agencies. The snow didn't stop business hours, so we were still able to meet with staff and share FFA's story. But once evening arrived, the city shut down. Instead of attending chapter banquets or community events, we found ourselves ordering pizza from the same delivery place each night. While our teammates were spending 16-hour days energizing FFA members across the country, Emily and I were curled up in our hotel room voting for Carrie Underwood on "American Idol." It wasn't the FFA Week we expected — but it was certainly one we'll never forget.

In recent years, social media has added a new dimension to FFA Week. Alumni and supporters update profile photos with pictures from their own FFA days, sharing how the organization shaped their leadership, confidence and career skills. A few years ago, Give FFA Day was established on the Thursday of FFA Week, providing a focused opportunity to give back.

That spirit of generosity is part of why I said yes when asked to join the Kansas FFA Foundation Board of Directors last year. My own FFA experience — and the impact I continue to see in students across our communities — made it an easy decision. What I've witnessed in my short time

on the board has exceeded expectations. Dedicated staff and volunteers work tirelessly to elevate opportunities for students and support agriculture teachers in meaningful ways.

This year's Give FFA Day momentum was impossible to miss. Media partnerships, coordinated social media campaigns and a live event at headquarters helped build excitement around Kansas's goal of raising \$50,000. The response was extraordinary.

By the end of the day, more than \$106,000 had been raised, with donations coming from all 50 states and every one of Kansas' 105 counties. The outpouring of support demonstrated just how deeply FFA resonates — not only with cur-

rent members but with generations who understand its lasting influence.

FFA Week is about celebration, yes. But it is also about investment — in students, in teachers and in the future of agriculture. Watching that support materialize in such a tangible way was both humbling and inspiring.

For me, FFA Week will always carry memories of blue jackets, spirited competitions and even a snowy Washington, D.C., adventure. More importantly, it represents a community committed to developing the next generation of agricultural and community leaders — and that is something worth celebrating every year.

## Upgrades along U.S. 83 underway

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) has begun phase two of the U.S. 83 Advanced Technology Project, which will install advanced highway technology along U.S. 83 from Rexford to Liberal. This phase will install highway technology in Finney, Scott, Thomas, Haskell, Seward and Logan counties.

Work will take place at 28 sites along this corridor. Key improvements include upgrading four signalized intersections with connected vehicle technology and freight signal priority, including Freight Video Detection Systems. The project will also add nine permanent portable dynamic message signs, 14 CCTV cameras, two permanent dynamic message signs, one road weather in-

formation system and two wind speed and visibility detector sites. These upgrades will provide travelers with real-time updates on roadway conditions, traffic delays and closures through KanDrive and message boards while also supporting improved mobility and efficiency for truck traffic.

Phillips Southern Electric Company Inc., of Wichita, is the contractor for this \$2.5 million project. Completion is expected in spring 2027, weather permitting.

For more information, contact Yazmin Moreno, KDOT Southwest Public Information Officer, at (620) 765-7080.

The map shows the approximate location of the project in red.

## Kelly approves program

Governor Laura Kelly announced that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved Kansas' Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Food Restriction Waiver.

"Today, Kansas joins 21 other states in implementing restrictions on candy and soda purchases with SNAP dollars," Governor Laura Kelly said. "I have always supported policies that incentivize healthy eating, including axing the state sales tax on food to put more money back in Kansans' pockets. Going forward, I would encourage the USDA to develop a nationwide eligibility strategy to reduce confusion and uncertainty for retailers and recipients alike."

The approved waiver, which will go into effect February 15, 2027, will exclude all candy and soda beverages (also known as soft drinks) from the definition of eligible foods under 7 CFR 271.2 for purchase with SNAP benefits. Candy and soda are defined by the state's food and sales tax laws within the state retailer tax:

•Candy is defined as a preparation of sugar, honey, or other natural or artificial sweeteners in combination with chocolate, fruits, nuts, or other ingredients or flavorings in the form of bars, drops, or pieces. Candy does not include any preparation containing flour and

shall require no refrigeration.

•Soft drink beverages are defined as nonalcoholic beverages that contain natural or artificial sweeteners. Soft drinks do not include beverages that contain milk or milk products, soy, rice, or similar milk substitutes or beverages that are greater than 50% vegetable or fruit juice by volume.

During the approval process USDA recommended an implementation date of February 15, 2027. USDA provided this recommendation based on feedback from retailers in other states that have similar approved waivers and avoids concerns with implementing restrictions over and through the 2026 holiday season.

The Kansas SNAP Food Restriction Waiver is made up of four plans that focus on communicating information to SNAP Food Assistance recipients and authorized retailers, as well as detailed evaluation, monitoring, and compliance plans.

DCF released a request for proposals (RFP) which closed on February 17, 2026. This RFP is to bring on a contracting partner to help DCF manage the implementation plans and process. The proposals received are under review and a contract is expected to be in place by April 2026.

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320 South Ave.  
WaKeeney, KS

Specials

**March Burger of the Month**  
The MacDaddy BBQ Burger – A juicy bacon cheeseburger loaded with tangy BBQ sauce and stacked high with crispy Mac & Cheese Bites.

**Soup Of The Day**

Monday - Creamy Chicken Poblano  
Tuesday - Broccoli Cheddar  
Wednesday - Chicken Enchilada  
Thursday - Baked Potato  
Friday - Tomato Bisque  
Saturday - Lasagna Soup  
Sunday - Cooks Special

**Sunday Special**  
Reuben Bierocks



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Events

**Lenten Specials**  
Celebrate the Lenten season with us by enjoying multiple Friday menu options available each week. Be sure to check in every Friday during Lent for delicious choices.

**Early St. Patrick's Day Celebration – March 13!**  
Join us for a night of Irish cheer, great music, and green beer!

Live Music - 7:30 - 10:30 PM  
Simply Tone featuring Anthony Pfeifer

Grab your friends, wear your green, and kick off St. Patrick's Day early with us!

[Find us at Prairie Rose Bar & Grill](#)

810 South Ave.  
WaKeeney, KS

Events

## ANNUAL BULL & FEMALE SALE

# BARTELS

## ANGUS

# MARCH 17, 2026

1 PM | AT THE RANCH | RIVERTON, NEBRASKA



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**BARTELS PROSPER 5069 #21439349**

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