

## BLUE CORDS INSPIRE

# Opportunity

By Rachael Smith, Communications Manager

**H**igh school graduation is a time when many students might cherish their last summer of freedom before being thrown into adulthood.

But South Sumter High School graduate William Jameson used his summer to launch into a whirlwind travel schedule to talk about agriculture after being installed as the 2016-2017 state president of Florida FFA.

You could say Jameson was born into an FFA family. His parents own a citrus nursery

and have always been involved in and supportive of FFA. His grandfather, brother, cousins, aunts and uncles were all members of the student organization growing up.

“I joined in sixth grade,” said Jameson, “and ever since then I have had a passion to be involved in American agriculture.”

His passion is what motivated Jameson to take advantage of everything that the 18,000-student-member organization had to offer, from the comradery to speaking competitions to state officer slots. He urges anyone who



wants to know more about agriculture or wants to sharpen their leadership skills to get involved in FFA.

“Jump right in. There is a place for everybody in the organization,” stated Jameson. “If you invest the time, you will reap the rewards.”

Jameson grew up in rural Sumter County and has always been part of production agriculture. He was the ideal candidate for his local FFA chapter. But Jameson quickly points out that you don't have to have an agricultural background to join FFA.

“One of the biggest FFA chapters in the state is in the city



William Jameson, far left, poses with 2016-2017 Florida FFA state officers at the FFB state headquarters in Gainesville.





Jameson served as the 2016-2017 Florida FFA state president.

of Miami. Students are involved in veterinarian assistant programs and other technical programs that are conducted in an intercity environment,” said Jameson. “Agriculture is a business that prepares you for any career you can imagine,” he added.

With more than 300 chapters in Florida, FFA provides hands-on, classroom instruction for students interested in exploring careers in business, marketing, science, communication, education, horticulture, production, natural resources, forestry and countless other diverse fields.

As the past president of FFA, Jameson spent 12 months traveling the Sunshine State, helping to share agriculture’s message to students, parents, legislators and business executives. He says that agriculture as a whole, has to do a better job in recruiting and appealing to the younger generation.

“We have to show that agriculture is about operating modern equipment and technology,” said Jameson. “It’s operating drones that can fly and do surveillance on croplands. It’s conducting research and using science to continue improving the food that we eat.”

“Technology is growing so rapidly, there are jobs that we don’t even know exist yet,” added Jameson.

In June of 2017, Jameson stepped down from his role of state president and turned the reign over to Kyle Garner of Clermont. Will he miss it? “Being FFA president has allowed me to make a difference and I will miss that,” said Jameson. “But it is a reality that we get to live for a very short time and we have to move on to the next opportunity.”

The next opportunity for Jameson is to continue his education. While his travel schedule may have slowed, his future plans are anything but idle. He is currently working at his parent’s citrus nursery while taking classes at Lake Sumter State College. Upon graduation, he plans to pursue an Agricultural Operations Management degree at the University of Florida.

After college he intends to use his skill set in public speaking coupled with his background in production agriculture to advocate for farmers at the state level.

“The FFA blue corduroy jacket is a symbol of opportunity,” said Jameson. “You just have to seize it.”



Learn more about FFA at <http://www.flaffa.org/>.