

## Forest Lake future farmers meet with state legislators

Forty high school students from Future Farmers of America (FFA) chapters throughout Minnesota attended the Ag Policy Experience (APEX) Conference in Saint Paul, Jan. 27-29. These chapter leaders met elected officials, hosted a legislative reception and developed their own policy agendas. Forest Lake FFA members Madison Carpenter, Rebecca Anderson and Grace Ackerman further developed their leadership skills while at this event.

The Ag Policy Experience conference targets high school FFA members with an interest in government, policy and agricultural solutions. Students learned about advocacy, key messages, the legislative process and telling their own story. They hosted state representatives and state senators on the agriculture and education committees and their own elected officials. Leaders from the Minnesota Departments of Agriculture, Education and Natural Resources spent time with the group. Students toured the House Chamber, the Supreme Court and the Governor's office and had the opportunity to sit in on a House Agriculture Committee Hearing where two students had the opportunity to testify about the value of agricultural education and the FFA.

As a cornerstone of the conference, students were able to take their experiences with the legislative process and apply them to their own passions. Before attending the conference, each student identified a locally relevant issue and submitted a proposal for a legislative response. Student leaders then caucused and prioritized their legislative agenda through a legislative committee process. They discussed taxes, creation of an agricultural "green new deal," response to low agricultural commodity prices and investment into education and rural mental health. Their legislative work culminated in committee work hosted at the State Office Building with support from professional legislators, lobbyists and state agricultural leaders.

More information about the experiences of FFA members and supporters can be found at [mnffa.org](http://mnffa.org), [ffa.org](http://ffa.org) and [forestlakeffa.org](http://forestlakeffa.org).



Submitted  
Forest Lake FFA members (left to right) Madison Carpenter, Grace Ackerman and Rebecca Anderson attended the Ag Policy Experience (APEX) Conference, where they were able to participate in a mock legislative process while at the Minnesota State Capitol.

Submitted

## ATHLETES OF THE MONTH

\*Athletes chosen by Press staff

### Maddie Rice

#### Forest Lake Girls Basketball

Maddie Rice, Forest Lake basketball senior guard, notched 30 points and nine steals in three games at the state tournament to help the Rangers win the consolation title. She tallied 11 points in a 48-38 loss to Eastview, nine points and four steals in a 49-39 win over Shakopee, and 10 points in a 64-56 win over Maple Grove, shooting 4-for-7 on 3-pointers the last two games. She averaged 9.5 points for the season.



### Grace Cote

#### Stillwater Girls Basketball

Grace Cote, Stillwater basketball forward, helped the Ponies win their first two games at the state tournament with her 3-point shooting. Cote was averaging 6.2 points before state, with three teammates doing most of the scoring. She shot 4-for-5 on three's (5-for-8 overall) and totaled 16 points in a 73-48 win over Shakopee, then 3-for-4 on three's (4-for-7 overall) in supplying 11 points in a 65-52 win over Eastview. She didn't score when the Ponies lost to a fantastic Hopkins team in the finals.



### Mitchell Jerde

#### Bethel University Baseball

Mitchell Jerde, Bethel University baseball freshman from Forest Lake, is batting .346 (9-for-26) with two doubles, a triple and a homer, knocking in seven runs, in his first eight games of college ball. The 6-4, 220-pound athlete stepped right into the starting lineup at first base. He played football, basketball and baseball for the Rangers.



### Reid Ballentyne

#### Stillwater Wrestling

Reid Ballentyne, Stillwater sophomore, captured his third state wrestling championship, capped by a 29-second pin against Buffalo's Ryan Scherber in the 126-pound finals. Battling injuries to his right knee and both ankles this season, he had two first-period pins, and decisions of 4-0 and 11-0, at state individuals. He helped the Ponies (25-1) place state team runner-up. Ballentyne was 32-2 this season and 123-3 over three seasons.

