

# MISSOURI RURALIST

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## Corn Illustrated



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# The natural

By JERILYN JOHNSON

**H**E is the voice of half a million members of the National FFA Organization. His role as National FFA president brings honor, but also heavy-duty responsibility. It requires traveling more than 100,000 miles to 40 states plus a trip to Japan. It involves meeting with top leaders in business, government and education. It means providing leadership training for students and promoting agricultural literacy. What he says and the decisions he and the National FFA officer team make during their 2007-08 term affect each FFA member.

Those who know Zach Kinne say he is a natural for the job.

Andrew McCrea, Maysville, who served as National FFA secretary in 1993-94, has worked with several national officer candidates over the years.

"Over time you get a feel for the process and who might have the ability to get an office," McCrea says. "I told my wife and John Kleiboeker [director, Missouri Beef Industry Council] the week before national convention that I thought Zach could become Missouri's second national president. I don't usually make such predictions. Zach is just what you want in a leader. He's got quiet confidence that earns respect."

"Zach has the ability to capture students' attention by his straightforward, simple, caring attitude," adds Steve Brown, Missouri FFA Association executive secretary.

### Key Points

- Zach Kinne is prepared to take on National FFA president role.
- Kinne's natural leadership and people skills are respected.
- He aspires to work in ag policy, but keep farming interests.

Kinne has been fortunate to have mentors like McCrea, Kleiboeker and his North Harrison High School FFA adviser Brandon Craig. He also gives much credit to his family and farming roots.

### Strong roots

Kinne is a product of Missouri soil — the son of Keith and Shelly Kinne, who raise Angus cattle on their farm near Eagleville. Keith grew up on a diversified farm near Hamilton and Shelly on a dairy south of Eagleville.

Zach Kinne is also a product of Missouri agriculture education. "My dad taught agriculture when I was young, so I spent a lot of time in the ag shop hanging around FFA members," he says. "When my freshman year came, it was a natural step to follow the FFA path."

### Leadership path

The National FFA officer selection process is intense and represents an assessment of years of academic and extracurricular accomplishments. The National Junior Angus Association's Leaders Engaged in Angus Development Conference gave Kinne his first taste of leadership at the age of 12. It strengthened as he became a

2003 graduate of the Missouri Agribusiness Academy.

In 2004, Kinne took on the role of Missouri Beef Ambassador. He also was on the task force that created the Missouri Junior Cattlemen's Association. Then came election to the office of state FFA president for 2005-06.

A National FFA leadership conference in Washington, D.C., influenced his decision to major in agricultural economics with an ag policy emphasis at the University of Missouri. An internship with MU Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute reinforced that decision. "I'm still exploring a career path, but I would like to work in Washington, D.C., for two to three years after graduation," Kinne says.

It's hard to find individuals as motivated and determined to succeed as Kinne. At 21 years old, he's at the stage of life where a young person tends to be pulled in many directions. Still, like a corner post firmly planted in the Missouri prairie, he stands straight and true.



**PROVEN LEADER:** Zach Kinne, National FFA president from Eagleville, encourages young FFA members aspiring to be officers to "look for ways to challenge yourself and learn every day."

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