**[EZ Speech Writers No. 15192]**

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Speech for Kristin Shelby’s daughter for the 2016 Agricultural Exploration Speaking Competition for eighth-grade school students sponsored by Oklahoma State University’s Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

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(Suggested title: **THE FFA & ME**)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . . DISTINGUISHED JUDGES: GOOD [MORNING/AFTERNOON].

TODAY, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THE FUTURE. YOU MIGHT NOT THINK SO, BUT TEENAGERS LIKE ME ACTUALLY THINK QUITE A LOT ABOUT THE FUTURE. I DON’T KNOW IF YOU [GESTURING WITH “AIR QUOTES”] “OLDER” PEOPLE WORRIED TOO MUCH ABOUT THE FUTURE BACK A HUNDRED YEARS AGO WHEN *YOU* WERE TEENAGERS. BUT TODAY, WE THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE A *LOT*. WE THINK ABOUT IT, AND WE TALK ABOUT IT, AND WE MOST DEFINITELY ***TEXT*** ABOUT IT.

OH-OH . . . JUST A SEC. [PRETEND TO RETRIEVE YOUR CELL PHONE, GLANCE AT IT QUICKLY, THEN LOOK UP AT THE AUDIENCE.] IT’S MY FRIEND, BETH. [PRETEND TO TEXT A MESSAGE, READING THE INITIALS OUT LOUD AS YOU DO SO, WITH THE APPROPRIATE DRAMATIC EMPHASIS.] “OMG . . . CTN . . . LOL . . . BFN.” [PRETEND TO PUT YOUR CELL PHONE AWAY; THEN, TO THE AUDIENCE.] SORRY ABOUT THAT!

DID YOU ALL UNDERSTAND WHAT I JUST TEXTED BETH? I SAID “OH MY GOD,” THAT WAS THE “OMG.” THEN I TOLD HER “CTN” — “CAN’T TALK NOW” . . .THEN I TEXTED “LOL,” WHICH OF COURSE MEANS “LAUGH OUT LOUD,” AND FINALLY I SAID “BFN,” WHICH MEANS “BYE FOR NOW.” IF YOU HAVE TEENAGERS AT HOME, THEN YOU PROBABLY KNOW WHAT ALL OR SOME OF THOSE THREE-LETTER ABBREVIATIONS STAND FOR IN TEXT-TALK. BUT TODAY, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THREE *DIFFERENT* LETTERS — LETTERS WE DON’T USE IN TEXTING AT ALL — AND THOSE THREE LETTERS ARE “F,” “F,” AND “A,” WHICH AS YOU KNOW STAND FOR “FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA.”

THE FFA IS A ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO STUDENTS WHO’RE INTERESTED IN AGRICULTURE AND LEADERSHIP. THAT’S WHAT IT SAYS ON THEIR WEBSITE. THE GROUP’S ORIGINAL NAME WAS “NEW FARMERS OF AMERICA,” BUT THEY CHANGED IT IN 1988 TO “FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA” BECAUSE THEY WANTED THEIR NAME TO EMPHASIZE THE FUTURE MORE DIRECTLY. AND TODAY, THE FFA ISN’T JUST FOR KIDS WHO WANT TO BE PRODUCTION FARMERS IN THE FUTURE; IT ALSO WELCOMES STUDENTS WHO WANT TO PURSUE FUTURE CAREERS IN TEACHING, IN MEDICINE, THE BUSINESS WORLD, THE SCIENCES, AND SO ON.

NOW, I, MYSELF, COME FROM A LONG LINE OF FARMING FAMILIES, GOING BACK SOME FIVE GENERATIONS. I GUESS I MIGHT NOT BE WHAT

YOU’D CALL A “TYPICAL” TEENAGE GIRL, BUT I *LOVE* THE FARMING LIFE, I TRULY DO.

OF COURSE, I DO DEFINITELY PLAN ON GOING TO COLLEGE. I WANT TO LEARN AS MUCH AS I CAN ABOUT ALL THE ASPECTS OF FARMING AND AGRICULTURE THAT I CAN — ESPECIALLY ALL THE MODERN, SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES THAT ARE BEING MADE EVERY DAY TO HELP FAMILY FARMS BECOME MORE PRODUCTIVE AND MORE PROFITABLE. I WANT TO LEARN ABOUT ALL THE NEWEST TECHNIQUES, THE NEWEST MACHINERY, AND THE GROWING TREASURE TROVE OF INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES THAT ARE BECOMING AVAILABLE ALMOST DAILY IN THE AGRICULATURAL INDUSTRY.

BUT I ALSO WANT TO LEARN ABOUT ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, CROP BIOLOGY, VETERNARY MEDICINE, NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, AND ALL THE OTHER ASPECTS OF FARMING AND AGRICULTURE THAT ARE THE REALITY IN TODAY’S TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD. AND THROUGH ITS SUPERVISED AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCES PROGRAM, THE FFA ALLOWS ME TO EXPLORE ALL OF THESE SUBJECTS, NOT JUST THROUGH BOOKS AND VIDEOS, BUT THROUGH ACTUAL WORK EXPERIENCES AND INTERNSHIPS AND IN-SCHOOL PROJECTS THAT SIMULATE THE REAL WORLD OF AGRICULTURE.

I BELIEVE THAT ALL OF THE EXPERIENCES THAT THE FFA IS PROVIDING ME WILL DEFINITELY PREPARE ME FOR SUCCESS AT WHATEVER COLLEGE I GO TO, AND WHATEVER SUBJECTS I DECIDE TO GET MY DEGREE IN. BUT WHATEVER DEGREE I EARN AT COLLEGE, I WILL BRING THAT KNOWLEDGE AND KNOW-HOW BACK TO THE FARM. FOR AS I’VE TOLD YOU, I LOVE THE FARMING LIFE, AND I TRULY BELIEVE THAT THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE IN AMERICA IS BRIGHT.

I WANT VERY MUCH TO BE PART OF THAT FUTURE, AND THE FUTURE FARMERS OF AMERICA IS GIVING ME THE CHANCE TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL. I’M VERY, VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE MANY LEARNING EXPERIENCES THE FFA HAS GIVEN ME, AND I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT I WILL STRIVE AS HARD AS I CAN TO BE LIKE THAT FARMER WHO WON AN AWARD BECAUSE HE WAS . . . A FARMER OUT-STANDING IN HIS FIELD!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

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The source for the information about the FFA used in this speech was the organization’s website, www.ffa.org.