

Where Are They Now?

LIFE AFTER FFA



CELEBRATING THE SEASON

This month's article features those who help us celebrate the season through agricultural careers, utilizing the skills gained in the FFA.

"Where Are They Now?" highlights former New Jersey FFA members who once wore the blue jacket and are now in successful careers. Through the interpersonal skills and support it provides, the FFA leads its members toward successful careers.

MARY COOMBS

Mary was a member of the Woodstown FFA Chapter from 1998-2002, and later became a Lifetime FFA Alumni member. She attended Penn State University and moved on to start a small family business with her sister, Dawn. Mary is now co-owner with her sister at *A Garden Party*, a floral design shop in Elmer, NJ. The business serves Philadelphia, the Jersey Shore, Princeton, Wilmington, and Delaware markets, creating beautiful designs for special occasions.

"The connections that FFA members make with people they interact with are lifelong connections. Those connection turn into mentors."

What advice would you give to FFA members?

"Everyone should explore job opportunities – even if you think it's not what you would like to do."



How would you define a "good" or "successful" life?

"Doing what you love – success isn't about money. The reward is more emotional and fulfilling. In the floral industry, floral arrangements have a lot of emotion connected to them – we deliver flowers with meaning."

How did Ag Education and the FFA help to prepare you for your career?

"While in high school, I was introduced to FFA through my horticulture class. In that class, I had opportunities to explore in floral design, and I went to the Hort Expo, winning the design contest. One of the judges was the local owner of a floral shop and offered me a job that I fell in love with. It exposed me to a career path that I didn't think I would be doing. When I went to Penn State, I studied horticulture and agribusiness. While there, I wrote a business plan to help me start the business I run today."



Mary & Dawn, Woodstown FFA

DAWN COLSON CLARK

Dawn was a member of the Woodstown FFA Chapter from 1996-1999. She served as a chapter officer for multiple years and continued her involvement in college at the State University of New York, Cobleskill. Now, Dawn is co-owner of *A Garden Party*, with her sister Mary Coombs.

How has Ag Ed and FFA prepared you for your career?

"I first became interested in floral design in my horticulture class in high school. I participated in a few contests. Ultimately, I ended up at SUNY Cobleskill because of the strong agricultural background of the school, which was important to me after being so involved in FFA during high school."

"Don't be afraid to go outside your comfort zone and join a team that you know nothing about. All those FFA experiences will make you more comfortable trying new things in the future."

How would you define a "good" or "successful" life?

"Waking up every day and loving what you do. I never dread going to work. I am excited about my job because I am doing what I love."



What is your favorite FFA memory?

"What really stands out are the friendships I made. I am still very close with many of those people and value the time we had together serving on committees, attending conventions, and practicing as a team throughout my time in the FFA."



DEB MOYER



Deb joined the Phillipsburg FFA Chapter in 1981, and later served as a State FFA Officer from 1983-1985. She attended Delaware Valley University, and now serves as an Adjunct Professor at Mercer County Community College teaching floral design. She works as a freelance floral designer in NJ, PA, and DE areas after owning The Posey Peddler [Easton, PA based] for 17 years.

What is your favorite memory in the FFA?

“The excitement of Opening Session at State Convention...I still get goosebumps!”

How did Ag Education and FFA help prepare you for your career?

“The entire world of floriculture was opened to me by my high school FFA program instructor, Mr. John Morrow. I went on to graduate from the same college he went to. After his retirement, he came to work at my flower shop as a designer. Lifelong connections are made in this program!”

What advice would you give to FFA members?

“Enjoy what you do to earn a living and you will never have to work a day in your life. Follow your passion!”

“The doors that the FFA can open for you are numerous.”

Everyone has a story to tell. We want to hear yours!

How has the FFA made a difference in your life?

Share Your Story with us at

<https://form.jotform.com/NJFFA/WhereAreTheyNow>

and be featured in a special issue!



tell us
**YOUR
STORY**

