

## Blue Jackets Descend Upon Indianapolis

*National FFA Convention underway.*

*Tom Bechman*

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The cheese handed out by the young ladies from Wisconsin FFA in the Hall of States display was mighty tasty. So were the cranraisins, made from cranberries. Wisconsin is a major producer of both these products.

At another booth, FFA members handed out chocolate milk and sweet potato pie. If you've never had it, it's consistency and taste resembles that of pumpkin. All this was just part of the activities underway in Indianapolis at the National FFA Convention.

This gathering of more than 50,000 young people and their advisors is so much more than just speeches and sessions, although they're important. One major local radio station with a window onto a downtown street had its personalities playing 'FFA bingo', with bingo cards made up with the names of states. The first two blue jackets with state names spotted by the on-air personalities were from New Mexico and Washington.



Kids in jackets representing Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Florida, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, California, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska - the list goes on and on - flooded the huge trade show designed to appeal to both FFA students and advisors. Some major ag names you'll recognize pull out innovative ways to get kids to stop and talk, including a 'Smash the weed' game by Syngenta. It greatly resembled the popular 'Whack-a-Mole' game. "Oh my, young man, you just killed a soybean plant," the Syngenta rep interjected. "Kill weeds, not soybeans."

Toyota was there with state-of-the-art vehicles, including a supped up 'gaming' car with a LD TV screen that popped up out of the trunk. The kids from Tennessee were

captivated by it when we walked by.

You know a conference is a big deal when the Marriott Hotel, one of the Hotels hosting guests and activities, places two antique tractors in their lobby - a Ford 960 and a Minneapolis Moline antique tractor. They were parked squarely in the center of the main floor, visible to everyone who walked in. Don't ask us how they got them in there - we're still working on that one.

The convention continues through Saturday. American FFA degrees will be presented Saturday morning, with the National FFA officer slate announced and collected Saturday afternoon. The field was cut to 15 candidates Tuesday evening. The remaining candidates will continue to interview for the six national spots throughout the week. The entire convention is being broadcast live on RFD-TV.

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