

History of Kansas FFA

The Chapman Center for Rural Studies, in Kansas State University's College of Arts and Sciences, has received a \$2,000 gift from the Kansas Association of the Future Farmers of America in recognition of the work undergraduate student researchers at the center are doing about rural life in Kansas.

As part of this work, Katherine Sundgren, a junior in history, Leonardville, is digitally preserving a collection, including newspaper clippings, that documents the history of the FFA back to 1928 in preparation for the 100th anniversary of the organization.

Chapman Center director Bonnie Lynn-Sherow, associate professor of history, was first made aware of the collection in the spring and decided that it was the perfect project for a summer intern.

"The history of the FFA is integral to both the history of Kansas agriculture and Kansas State University," Lynn-Sherow said. "The collection highlights the work of young adults dedicated to agricultural leadership and whose stories feel simultaneously foreign and intimate to our current student interns."

The Chapman Center provides undergraduates with hands-on training in valuable professional skills such as accessioning, digital preservation and even film editing.

The FFA hopes to make these digital resources openly available to the public through a web-based exhibit about the Kansas chapter.

"I was a part of my high school's FFA program for four years," Sundgren said. "It's nice being able to help preserve a long tradition for future generations to enjoy the rich history that surrounds the FFA program. I've seen how important it is to many members of my community and I'm glad that my work here helps keep the tradition alive."

"As we look forward to the 100th anniversary of FFA, the Kansas chapter is excited to partner with the Chapman Center for Rural Studies in collection and documentation of the rich history of agricultural education," said Mary Kane, who is with the Kansas FFA Association.

The large collection includes hundreds of photos, handwritten and typewritten meeting notes, scrapbooks and even film reels that have not been seen for several decades.

"The partnership between Kansas FFA and the Chapman Center for Rural Studies is exciting as many of the foundational events of the association are due to the commitment of rural Kansas schools," Kane said. "We are excited with the capacity of the center to make accessible the documents and archives of our history."

The FFA's partnership with the Chapman Center is the one of many digital projects the center is engaged in or has completed since 2007, including commercial collections, oral histories, museum collections, slide and film collections, postcard collections and several important family collections that Chapman students use in their published research.

"It's definitely a win-win for everyone," Lynn-Sherow said. "Organizations and individuals feel good about preserving the past, while our students gain an appreciation of our collective responsibility to share those stories. They learn to work with and rely on others for the greater good. I can't imagine a better learning outcome than that."