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Words and Deeds earn Swan family "FFA Family of the Year" Award

BROOKINGS (March 1, 2015) - The SD FFA Foundation named the annual "FFA Family of the Year" award, honoring a family's long term involvement in the SD FFA/Agriculture Education program. The 2015 recipient of this award is the **Tom & Karen Swan family**, including Tom and Karen along with their children and their spouses TJ & Sonya, Jamie & Justin, & Tyler as well as future FFA members: Layton, Kajsa, and Kade. The award was presented on February 28th, during half time of the SDSU/FFA Corduroy Classic basketball game.

"The purpose of this award is to recognize a SD FFA family that has gone the extra-mile for the FFA at the local and state levels through their words and deeds. The actions of the entire Swan family through multiple generations have modeled the FFA mission ... developing premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agriculture education. We are glad we could recognize them with this special award," said Gerri Ann Eide, SD FFA Foundation Executive Director.

The Swans have been very active at the chapter, state, and national levels of FFA. They put the phrase from the FFA Creed, *"a faith born not of words but of deeds"* into action.

Tom and Karen have actively supported FFA for more than 20 years. As the parents of three past FFA members of the Newell FFA chapter, and Tom a past Newell FFA member himself, their association with the blue corduroy jackets spans decades. Tom and Karen are both active supporters of their local FFA chapter and served as Advisory Council members for a number of years and actively support each project, class and activity offered. They step up and help when needed, including bringing a buffalo calf across the state for the FFA State Fair Animal Nursery. Jamie, started a new Agriculture Education/FFA program in Harding County and served as the ag teacher and advisor there for six years. Before that she served as the interim State FFA Executive Secretary as she worked on her Master's Degree at SDSU. She is always full of inspiring words of motivation to members and advisors alike, and looks at challenges as opportunities for something new. Tyler is an SDSU Junior majoring in Range Science, active member of the collegiate FFA at SDSU, and leads the State FFA Convention & State Leadership IT crew, keeping power points and videos running smoothly. The Swans frequently help judge district Career Development Events and state awards and are always willing to help out when needed with their time, talents and resources. They are verbal advocates for agriculture education/FFA and all it can do for young people. They never miss an opportunity to share with others how their lives have been positively influenced by Agriculture Education and FFA.

Newell FFA advisor, Jodie Severson, says, "The Swans are a family that every FFA Chapter wishes for as far as a family support system. They have given 100% of themselves physically, mentally and emotionally to the FFA organization throughout the years. Their passion for helping the younger generation believe in the future of agriculture is boundless. I am blessed to have their support and leadership within our local FFA chapter as well as to call them my friends!" Jamie and Tyler have all served as State FFA Officers, and each put their heart into influencing and inspiring other young people through their opportunity to serve the FFA organization. More important than any titles they held are the examples of leadership they set, serving as role models for students in the organization. Tom, TJ, Sonya, Jamie & Tyler were active local members, applied for proficiencies, and held chapter offices, while TJ, Jamie & Tyler went on to earn the State and American FFA Degrees and won various state CDEs, advancing to the national level as high school students.

"The impact made, memories created and friendships developed through our FFA involvement, even before we zipped up our own jackets, are too great to count. We are truly blessed and forever thankful for the premier leadership, personal growth and career success we've cultivated through our involvement in the FFA," says Jamie (Swan) Brown. Family members continue to promote FFA through their actions, participating in chapter and state activities, and supporting others who are involved. They always take time to listen and find ways to answer a question, help with a project, or fill out an application. Each member of the Swan family is a role model that everyone can look up to, and they inspire younger FFA members to become more active.

The Swans have been involved in many community activities through the Newell FFA including: chaperoning trips to Oklahoma City, Louisville, Pierre & Brookings; as well as assisting with local events like the FFA lock-in, town leadership demonstration, the Newell Ram Sale and much more. Not only do they give their time to the FFA – they give it to several other local and state organizations. Tom and Karen were named 2014 Butte County Conservation Family of the Year. Tom, Karen, TJ and Sonya, and Jamie and Justin are all active in production agriculture as well as actively seeking ways to help educate and support FFA chapters through their jobs.

The SD FFA Foundation presented each Swan family group with an "FFA Family of the Year" photo frame and thank you for their tremendous impact on agriculture education and FFA in SD. The FFA Family of the year award is sponsored by the SD FFA Foundation.

The National FFA Organization provides leadership, personal growth and career success training through agricultural education to 610,240 FFA members, aged 12–21, in 7,665 chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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About National FFA Organization

The National FFA Organization is a national youth organization with 4,100 South Dakota members as part of 81 local FFA chapters in SD school districts. The FFA mission is to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. For more, visit the South Dakota FFA Foundation at: <http://www.sdffaoundation.org/>.

Photo Caption: The Tom and Karen Swan family receive the FFA Family of the Year award during the SDSU/FFA Corduroy Classic game Feb. 28th. Front row: Tom, Karen & Tyler Swan. State officers: Middle: Nicole Hamilton, Hitchcock; Ellie Minihan, Brandon; Back Row: Jennifer Emery, Wall; Kaden Eisenbraun, Wall; Taylin Albrecht, DeSmet; and Andrea Collins, Sturgis.