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Local students attend FFA leadership conference

By **Alex Plumb**

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Several students represented the Yosemite FFA Chapter at the California FFA Leadership Conference, attended by more than 4,000 and held in Fresno in late April.

Included were Karen Boortz, Ashley Christensen, Jessica Gambriel, Alex Plumb, Nick Ricker, Mellany Silva, Kaite Simms, Amanda Steen and Robert Zimmerman.

Serving as chaperones were Brad Bessey, the Yosemite FFA adviser and Cari Simms.

At the opening session, the 2005-2006 state officers made their grand entrance. They made their personal entrance — by rappelling, and with hummers, snowmobiles and a horse carriage — to the first session.

Erica Der, the national vice president, gave the keynote address, entitled "The Things That Matter Most." Her speech was very powerful and influenced many members.

Keynote speaker for the second session was Roger Crawford, a former Olympic tennis player. He spoke about his disabilities and how he overcame them. He often referred to his daughter, who helped him with his problems, and how his disabilities didn't affect her and the way she saw him. His speech was very inspirational.

The retiring speech that Sentinel Beau Williamson gave was "The Shape We Make." He talked about the differences in people and that they each have a different shape in life.

At the third session Beatriz Campuzano, the state reporter, gave her speech, "The Friend Within You." Her speech was about a life experience. One of her best friends died in a car accident. She felt her other friends relied on her to cope with the loss.

She spoke on how she was strong for them on the outside but hurt on the inside, too. But then she realized she needed to be a friend deep within herself and help her friends.

The speech of Daniel Bays, the state treasurer, was entitled "Enjoy the Ride." He spoke of when he was a kid on his family farm — such as driving the tractor and messing some of the fields up, but still having a great time. He was talking about all the times you mess up and that you should enjoy something about it.

On the third day of the conference, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger spoke to the group about his trip to the Orient. He said he was very proud to see all the California fruits and vegetables in Asia and stressed how important California agriculture is to the nation and to the world.

Natalie Ryan, the state secretary, gave her speech, "Be Proud." Then Stephanie Obad, the state vice president, spoke.

Then the President, Jimmy Pierce, gave his speech, "Bring It."

The California FFA members will surely remember the 2005-2006 officers; they showed and taught us some great leadership skills.

On the final day the incoming state officers were chosen. After that, the 2005-2006 officers installed the new officers, who took their positions and ended with the closing ceremonies. The new team looks like a great replacement team.

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