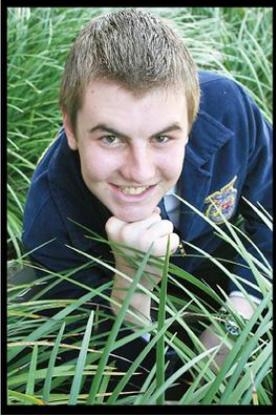


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By Patrick McCallister

For Hometown News

PIERSON - Brendan Register, 15, is growing up in rural America raising plants and livestock. He loves everything about agriculture, and it shows. At the 83rd annual Future Farmers of America's State Convention and Leadership Conference, he took top honors for his grade level, the coveted State Star Discovery Degree.

"He was the top FFA middle-school member in the state," said Lane Woodward, T. DeWitt Taylor Middle-High School teacher and student-group advisor.

That honor should look pretty good on his college application to the Massachusetts Institute of [Technology](#). That's where Brendan would like to head to study physics.

"I think it's cool we're making (sub-atomic) particles at places like the (Large Hadron Collider)," he said. "Physics is the basis of agriculture, the earth and everything."

Not only does Brendan easily name off more varieties of carrots than one can keep up with, he'll tell a listener that the faster-than-light travel in some of his favorite movies is unlikely to ever happen, because "It would take nearly infinite energy."

Little surprise that Brendan went on to represent Florida in the FFA's 2011 National Agriscience Fair and placed third in the nation in the Biochemistry division. He said science, technology and agriculture are inexorably braided, making it appropriate that one of the largest agricultural states in the Union is also [home](#) to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

"Agriculture isn't just sows, cows and plows," he said. "One farmer provides enough food for 100 people. They do that with technology, like (the global positioning system). It's not one little guy on a John Deere tractor driving around."

The high-school freshman said he's inspired by a lot of people - a diverse crowd including Belinda Chason, former state advisor of the Florida FFA; and [Stephen Hawking](#), famous theoretical physicist and author of bestselling science books, such as "A Brief History of Time." Even if he ends up a physics professor at the California Institute of Technology, Brendan has a prediction.

"I'll always have my roots in agriculture," he said. "I'll always have a farm, and be around cows. But, I don't want to be just a farm kid."

His mom hopes Brendan heads to her alma mater, the University of Florida, and gets a degree, then a job, in agricultural engineering. That's where her husband, Michael, and she went after they graduated from Taylor. Brendan, too, wants to make a stop at UF before heading to MIT.

"Brendan is very driven," Ms. Register said. "He sets his mind to something and does it." With wisdom beyond his years, Brendan said he doesn't see himself as anything but fortunate that he found his passions early on, and he works to inspire his peers to find and get into theirs. One of my friends wanted to do the dance club, and I said, 'Do that and be your best at it,'" he said. "Everyone has a passion."