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Spotlight

Nebraska FFA Alumni and Supporters

December 2024

**Mau receives
Star Award
in Agribusiness,
pg. 19**





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Blue & Gold
Spotlight
 Nebraska FFA Alumni and Supporters
 December 2024



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 Carson Mau poses on one
 of his many company lawn
 mowers, see story on page
 19.*

Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters:

By Jill Goedeken

While my term as the Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters Council president comes to a close, and I take a moment to reflect on the past two years, I can't help but ask myself, "Do all of the members of the NE FFA Alumni & Supporters know what we at the state level of the Alumni & Supporters do?"

Hopefully I can shed some light on what we, as a council, do while supporting Agriculture Education and the FFA in Nebraska.

DID YOU KNOW? – that the Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters is a state-wide organization whose mission is to support Agriculture Education and the FFA at the local, state, and national levels? The council is made up of 13 volunteers and 5 ex-officio members representing NAEA (Nebraska Agricultural Educators Association), UNL, Post-Secondary Education, the State FFA Association, and the State FFA Officers.

DID YOU KNOW? – the total membership in Nebraska includes 51 active Alumni & Supporters Chapters? If you look up your local Alumni & Supporters chapter number, you will find that the final digits represent the order that your Chapter was chartered in Nebraska. For example, the Kimball FFA Alumni & Supporters Chapter number is NEA0001. That means that Kimball was the very first FFA Alumni & Supporters Chapter to Charter in Nebraska.

DID YOU KNOW? – at the time of this writing, Nebraska has 11,092 members? That number includes 1,605 Life members, 507 Annual members, and 8,980 Associate members. Life membership requires a one-time membership fee of \$250. Annual memberships

don't require a fee unless requested at the local level, and Associate memberships are complimentary five year memberships given to every FFA member upon earning their State Degree. What can your chapter do to encourage your Associate members to become Annual members when their Associate membership expires?

DID YOU KNOW? – we are on social media? Check out "Nebraska FFA Alumni" on Facebook and <https://nebraskaffaalumni.org/> for our website.

DID YOU KNOW? – the Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters Chapter received recognition at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana in October 2024 as an Outstanding State Alumni? Congratulations are also due to the Lakeview and North Bend FFA Alumni & Supporters Chapters for receiving recognition as Outstanding Local Chapters in the Central Region during National Convention.

DID YOU KNOW? – our State Council spends a great deal of time planning activities throughout the year? These activities include our Annual Conference and Awards Banquet, State Convention, Nebraska Career Education Conference, and FFA Day at the State Fair.

DID YOU KNOW? – we financially support Student-Teacher scholarships, Leadership Scholarships, CDE, Proficiency, and LDE awards, and recognize FFA advisors, chapters, and individuals for their outstanding dedication and achievements.

DID YOU KNOW? – a community service project was part of the 2024 Conference? The State Council hosted a soup supper at the Columbus Rescue Mission



**Nebraska FFA Alumni
& Supporters
President Jill F. Goedeken**

the evening before the conference opened. It was an extremely cold and snowy evening, and the soup supper was well received by all of the guests at the Mission.

DID YOU KNOW? – Lincoln is the site of the 2025 Annual Conference and Awards Banquet? The committee has been working diligently putting together interesting agri-business tours, speakers, and events. Highlights will include tours of the Innovation Campus, the Scarlet Hotel, Duncan Aviation, the Food Bank of Lincoln, Wackel Farms Wagyu, Settje Agri-Services & Engineering, & James Arthur Vineyard. Our meals will be hosted by the Crete FFA Alumni & Supporters and the Malcolm FFA Chapter. The annual Awards Banquet complete with Dessert, Live, & Silent Auctions will be held at the Havelock Social Hall. Be sure to check out the center of this edition of the Blue & Gold Spotlight for all the details and registration information.

DID YOU KNOW? – that I can't give enough praise to the passion-

2024 Blue & Gold Spotlight

What do we do for FFA education?

ate, dedicated, and devoted individuals on the Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters Council that I have had the pleasure of working with. These people are leaders in their communities who dedicate their time and energy not only at the state level of the FFA Alumni & Supporters, but also at the local level, sharing their time and

talents with their local FFA chapters and FFA Alumni & Supporters chapters. These friends keep this organization running smoothly and are instrumental in providing opportunities for the future leaders in agriculture across the state of Nebraska. Thank you to all of my fellow council members. And thank you to all our NE

FFA Alumni & Supporters members from across the state for supporting your local FFA chapter and the Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters. Over the past two years as president, I count all of you that I have met among my many blessings.

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Meet the Council

Melissa Hagemeister



Melissa Hagemeister joined the Nebraska State FFA Alumni Council in 2020. She is a past North Bend FFA member and currently the vice president of the North Bend FFA Alumni. Melissa received her American Degree in 2012 and continues to be engaged in her local FFA chapter and at the state level.

Melissa currently works for Nebraska Extension in West Point and resides in Scribner with her husband Kyle. They are expecting their first child in March 2025.

Well, did you know this? Facts about Nebraska FFA Alumni history.

By Joe Baldassare

The Nebraska FFA Chapter Procedure Contest was established in 1947. The first

winning team (1947) was Waverly. The next six annual winning teams were: 1948 Kearney; 1949 Columbus; 1950 Waverly; 1951 Lincoln Northeast; 1952 Waverly; 1953 Lincoln Northeast

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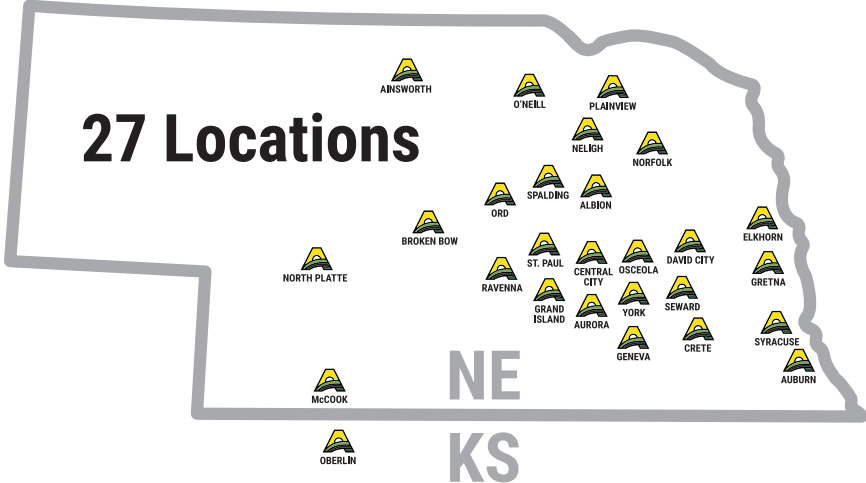
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2023-24 Nebraska State Officers



Alexa Tollman

Hi, I'm Alexa Tollman. I am a freshman at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying Agricultural Education with hopes to come back to western Nebraska and become an Ag Teacher and FFA Advisor. I am a part of the fifth generation in my family to live and work on the family ranch. Agriculture has been an integral part of my life and the privilege of growing up on the ranch will always be a part of my story. My SAE projects include my show cattle operation and cattle breeding herd which has better prepared me for my future in raising cattle. This year, serving as a Nebraska State FFA vice president, I am so excited to continue networking with members at events throughout the year. Already, I have been blessed to hear about students' passions in agriculture and have learned so much about the state around me. I look forward to advocating for experiences I've taken hold of and engaging members in new opportunities in FFA!

I am Brynn Almgren, FFA state secretary, and I am a freshman at UNL studying nutrition and health sciences. I am from Spencer, Nebraska, but my senior year I moved to Stuart Nebraska where I finished out my high school and FFA career. Throughout high school I completed two SAEs. These included my lifeguarding job under Home and Occupational Safety, and my egg business under Poultry Production Entrepreneurship. In addition to SAEs, I also participated in many competitions throughout my years in FFA. These included Parliamentary Procedure, Natural Resources Speaking, Food Science CDE, Floriculture CDE, Environmental and Natural Resources CDE, and many more. I also got the chance to be in the Nebraska FFA state choir for all 4 years of my high school career. This year I look forward to connecting with members, supporters and alumni, advocating for agriculture, and making a lasting impact. I am excited to continue my year of service to the Nebraska FFA and look forward to continuing my support in the future.



Brynn Almgren



Calie Cockburn

Hello! My name is Calie Cockburn, and I am currently a freshman at UNL majoring in agricultural education with the intention of being an ag teacher and FFA advisor. I'm from Sioux City, Iowa. I later moved to Emerson, Nebraska, where I was an avid member of the Emerson-Hubbard FFA chapter. I never had a strong background in agriculture growing up but joining FFA launched me into different experiences in agriculture! For my SAE I worked as a farmhand at a feedlot in town. I was rocket-launched into new experiences and learned about the parts of agriculture that are very underrepresented. This was the pivoting point in my life where I knew I wanted to pursue a career in agricultural education. In my year as a Nebraska state vice president, I am most looking forward to advocating for agriculture across the state and connecting with students who were just like me coming from an urban background; showing them that agriculture is for everyone!



Claire Woepfel

Hello, I'm Claire Woepfel. I was raised on a cow-calf operation on the edge of the Sandhills, near Chambers, Nebraska. I am a freshman at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln majoring in agriculture education. I aspire to be a high school agriculture educator and FFA advisor after graduating. I am honored to be serving as one of the State Vice Presidents for Nebraska FFA this year! For me, FFA is a family tradition, and one that I could not be prouder to be a part of. From watching my older brother in FFA, to following in the footsteps of my relatives that served the state organization, it just makes my year of service so much more special to continue a legacy. I am looking forward to what the rest of this year of service will bring.



Peyton Hinrichs

I am Peyton Hinrichs, serving as FFA vice president, from the Meridian FFA Chapter. I am the oldest girl in a family of five brothers. I love to spend time in my garden in the summer and caring for my houseplants and succulents. Hydrangeas are my favorite flower because I love growing them at home. I own my own business and SAE called "Sprouting Roots", where I sell plants in coffee cups or found items and sell them at craft shows. My favorite part of FFA is making friends wherever I go and developing career-ready skills from the competitions I compete in. I am so excited to serve the state of Nebraska this coming year by putting my heart and passion for agriculture into all that I do.



Trey Stewart

I'm Trey Stewart serving as your vice president for 2024-2025. Wisner Nebraska is where I call home and where I first developed my love for agriculture. My dream is to become a fifth-generation pork producer and a first-year poultry entrepreneur. I'm currently a freshman at Northeast Community College majoring in agribusiness, wanting to go into ag sales for livestock feed and pharmaceuticals. I am excited to go on chapter visits and see how different chapters in Nebraska learn about agriculture as well as make new connections with members. I can't wait to grow my education through the connections I make this year.

Hi, I'm Reagan Choat., FFA state president. Growing up in Plainview, Nebraska, I've always had a passion for agriculture, and FFA has been the perfect place to explore that passion. Over the years, I have competed in nearly every contest FFA has to offer. One of my favorite parts of FFA has been my Supervised Agricultural Experiences (SAE), where I manage a dirt-run pork operation and a commercial sheep flock. I also worked for an organic row crop and cow-calf operation south of Plainview during high school. As I head to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to study horticulture and minor in the Engler Entrepreneurship Program, I'm excited to take the skills and experiences I've gained from FFA with me. FFA has changed my life in so many ways, and I am proud to give back to the organization that helped shape who I am today.



Reagan Choat



Members of the Malcom FFA Chapter voted to participate in the hurricane relief program. The chapter doated four pallets worth of items for those in need that were affected by the hurricanes.

New Malcolm chapter starts by embracing the learning curves

By Aedynn Graham

Supported.

That is the word that best describes Malcolm High School's FFA chapter, the newest addition to Nebraska FFA.

According to chapter advisor, Colbey Luebbe, the chapter currently has around 30 members. The chapter is growing in size, knowledge, and community participation, but it took a lot of hard work and effort to get the chapter to where it is today, according to Superintendent Ryan Terwilliger

"I was approached by a parent," Terwilliger said. "Then I personally had a meeting with our Industrial Technology teacher--Andy Christensen. Andy had a wealth of experience and knowledge about FFA, and he had been through the process of starting a chap-

"In the end the Board was convinced and formally gave the go-ahead to pursue an FFA chapter at Malcolm Public Schools."

-Ryan Terwilliger

ter in one of his previous schools. Most importantly, he was excited about the opportunity of starting a chapter at Malcolm and was willing to spearhead the operation."

"When he was satisfied with his progress and was



The FFA Chapter hosted the annual halloween Fun Run in 2023. Members passed out candy to the trick or treaters running by.

ready to present his findings to the Board, we added it to the regular meeting, monthly agenda,” Terwilliger said. “At that board meeting, Mr. Christensen gave his presentation, and we also heard supporting testimonies from the community, both from parents and students. In the end, the board was convinced, and formally gave the go-ahead to pursue an FFA chapter at Malcolm Public Schools.”

Although Christensen played a crucial role in creating the chapter, he was not able to become the advisor. Terwilliger said Christensen helped advise on the hiring process though.

Terwilliger said that together they were able to find and hire Colbey Luebbe as the replacement for Christensen. “Ms. Luebbe hit the ground running and is currently moving us forward with our new program,” Terwilliger said.

Starting a chapter does not come without challenges.

“It’s been difficult coming to a newly started chapter because the students can’t ask the upperclassmen ‘how does this contest work,’” Luebbe said. “I just want them to ask questions and learn something and have fun. That is all I can ask for.”

According to Luebbe, the first contest Malcolm will be participating in is livestock judging, but winning is not their main goal yet.

“I would say that our goal this year is go in with a positive mindset and learn something from the contest. Take something away, and next year we can know more about how the contest is run,” Luebbe said.

Luebbe said her students are learning as they are going and that’s okay, because so is she.

“I am learning as I go, too, because I have to learn to explain things in more detail for them. I would say, so far, they are picking up on stuff and doing

“Go in with a positive mindset and learn something from the contest.”

- Colbey Luebbe

well,” Luebbe said.

This is Luebbe’s first time as an FFA advisor after graduating from South Dakota State University in 2021 and working at Laurel Concord Coleridge for two years.

According to Luebbe, Malcolm FFA is looking forward to planning many activities involving the community in the future. Some of the ideas include teaming up with the NRD, Natural Resource District, for a community night and water testing, hosting a Halloween Fun Run, and going to the elementary school to talk to the students about agriculture.

The community and school support for Malcolm FFA has been a strong factor in the creation and growth of the new chapter.

“Malcolm is super excited. There has been a lot of community support already, and the members are eager to learn, learn what to do and be involved,” Luebbe said.



The FFA Chapter teamed up with the NRD - Lower Platte South to test private well waters and the nitrate levels.

Norfolk's Ransen uses research to win 2024 Star in Agriscience

By Grace Reedy

"You're not just doing the project to do the project, you're doing the project to gain skills that you're going to use in life," Cole Ransen, a graduate of Norfolk Senior High School, said. "The recognition is kind of just a sidebar." Ransen kept himself humble despite winning the FFA State Star award in agriscience for 2024.

Ransen, a December 2023 graduate, had a clear interest in agriscience and research and Norfolk's programs helped him on the path to winning the State Star.

"I've always been kind of interested in math and science and I knew that's what I was going to do after high school," Ransen said. "Knowing that I had to be here for four years and knowing I was going to have to take some elective classes, I might as well take something that seemed interesting."

Ransen was involved in FFA from his freshman year until he graduated from Norfolk High in December of 2023. The work for this award spanned his entire high school career.

"I know I spent a lot of time after school, not just sitting in class," Ransen said. "I had to take days out of my week that I would just come [into Mr. Anderson's classroom], like, twice a day at least to water the plants and do the experiment, write the report, find out what I was going to talk about in my presentation, and going out and finding other people to review my presentation before I was going to do it."

Ransen said a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) consists of experiments, entrepreneurships, research, or community service that can tie back to agriculture. The Norfolk Daily News wrote an article about his award.

The supervised agricultural experience allows FFA members to be recognized for their work in and outside of the classroom, according to the local newspaper.

"Students are required to keep track of their hours spent working and money earned as well as skills and values they gain from their experiences. State stars are seniors that are chosen each year in



Cole Ransen

their respective areas of agribusiness, agriscience, placement and production for excelling in their SAEs."

The projects he worked on for his SAE included studies on space peppers through a NASA program in 2021, studies on radish growth also through a NASA program in which he earned first place at both district and state levels in 2022 and experiments on the use of sawdust waste in concrete in 2022. For his senior year, the focus was solely on preparing write-ups and applying for the award.

Ransen's determination throughout his years in Norfolk's chapter brought praise from Jonathan Anderson, a teacher at NHS and the chapter's advisor.

"I wish I had more students like Cole," Anderson said. "I've never done this award because we've never had the quality of individuals. These ideas and his creativity taught me the new material that he might have learned."

Anderson went into more detail, explaining how Ransen was a hard worker in and out of the classroom. It reflected on his work and research despite the difficulties Ransen faced.

Ransen said difficulties included being able to decide on what to research, making sure his experiments weren't biased and that his experiments weren't like research he had done before were the hardest.

Despite the still found enjoyment in the recognition that he could do these difficult processes. He believes it has helped him further his knowledge, gain

new skills and meet new people. Anderson agreed with Ransen's claims on growth.

"He turned from a very shy young man into a not as shy young man and started to talk more to others and became more active, not only in agriscience but also in school in general," Anderson said.

The State Star award in agriscience helped Ransen grow in his knowledge and allowed for Norfolk Senior High to flaunt a new success. Anderson shared that the chapter has had individuals get into the top selection, but never win the award. Ransen is the first in Norfolk's history.

Ransen did have a national FFA spotlight where he had to prepare a speech and presentation and answer questions on the same topics that won him the State Star award. Apart from his hard work regarding the award, Ransen worked with his fellow chapter members in land judging that got them to nationals. He ended up a member of the national chapter his freshman, sophomore and junior years.

After graduating in 2023, Ransen is now a student at Northeast Community College in Norfolk with a major in electro-mechanical engineering. His future plans include getting an internship and possibly studying for a second degree in electrical construction.

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FFA after WWII, looking back 79 years

By Joe A. Baldassare

The Future Farmers of America (FFA), the national organization of boys studying vocational agriculture in public secondary schools, was founded in 1928. During WWII, many Vocational Agriculture Education programs and Future Farmers of America chapters had shut down for the war effort.

In the years that followed, a resurgence of Vocational Education programs and FFA membership began. Many new contests, awards, and programs were started; and the opportunities for FFA members to excel were increased at the national and state levels. Post-war technologies began new areas of study for agriculture students. Here are a few highlights of some of the many award winners as well as many firsts and additions, year by year (a very incomplete list).

1946

In the 1945-46 school year, there were only 73 active FFA Chapters in Nebraska, down from the 107 before the war. FFA enrolment was down to 2,584 compared to 3,081 before 1941. On June 30, 1946, the active membership totaled 206,039 in the 6,000 chapters of 47 States, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico.

Delegates to the National FFA Convention in 1946 from Nebraska were Jim Lutes-Hebron and Howard Vogel-Nebraska City.

The Nebraska Star State Farmer Award was started in 1946. It was awarded to Loran Schmit-Columbus.

The Nebraska Farm Electrification - Foundation Award was started. It was awarded to Don Hodgson-Lexington.

The Nebraska Agricultural Mechanics - Foundation Award was started and was awarded to Lloyd Divis-Schuyler.

1947

The FFA National Band started performing at the National FFA Convention in 1947. It was often called the "Mail Order Band", consisting of members from many states and, was assembled from talented FFA member musicians. Selected members practiced at home with sheet music and instructions sent to them by mail. They came to Kansas City several days before the convention to rehearse. They performed at the Convention sessions and at many banquets, award sessions, and the American Royal during Convention week. Nebraska had eight members who were



1964 National Convention. One-millionth jacket presentation. Picture shows Mr. Hawkins at podium, Mr. Tolan and Edward Wiederstein of Audubon, Iowa, Chapter. (IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives Photograph)

selected for the first National FFA Band.

The Nebraska FFA Public Speaking Contest was won by Delbert Benson-Imperial for presenting a speech entitled "Farming is Dangerous."

1948

The Nebraska Star Dairy Farmer - Foundation Award was started. It was awarded to Max O. Schmidt-Minden.

The first FFA Chorus and National FFA Talent program was held at the 1948 National FFA Convention. Nebraska had six members who participated in the first National FFA Chorus.

The National FFA Supply Service began operation in 1948.

Record jump in membership from 238,269 in 1947 to 260,300 in 1948. So many members (10,000) attended the 20th National FFA Convention that a folding-cot hotel was set up in the basement of the Municipal Auditorium in Kansas City.

The National FFA Week was first celebrated during the week of George Washington's birthday (February 28th) and has continued annually.

FFA members participated in the organization's first international exchange program with the

Young Farmers Club of Great Britain. This exchange launched a major international program that included internships for students and the establishment of future farmer organizations worldwide.

1949

The Nebraska Soil & Water Management - Foundation Award was started. It was awarded to Herbert Kasten-Waverly.

Nebraska had four FFA members raised to the American Farmer degree. They were Gerald Loske-Columbus, Russell Baldwin-Creighton, James Sanderford-Humbolt, Gus Bremer Jr.-Stanton.

1950

The Nebraska Farm Safety Foundation Award was started and was awarded to the Harrison FFA Chapter.

The 81st U.S. Congress passed a bill granting a federal charter to The National Future Farmers of America. U.S. President Harry S. Truman signed the bill on Aug. 30, and it became Public Law 81-740.

The Rhode Island FFA Association, with five chapters and 82 members, was chartered. The FFA was in all 48 states, as well as the then territories of Hawaii and Puerto Rico.



The four Regional Star Farmers here posed for this picture before the naming of the 1960 Star Farmer of America on October 12, 1960. They are (L-R) Charles Sargent - Marshfield, Vermont; Arden W. Uhler - Verdigre, Nebraska; (front row) Jerrald Duane Truax - Steamboat Springs, Colorado; and Sam B. McDonald - Carthage, Tennessee. Arden W. Uhler was named the "Star Farmer of America" later that evening. (UPI Tele. Press Photo - part of the personal collection of the author)

Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters

1951

Two Nebraska FFA chapters were honored at the 1951 National Convention from among the seventy-eight chapters in the National Chapter Award contest. They represent the best from the Future Farmers of America's 8,295 local chapters. Nebraska Chapters honored were the Waverly FFA Chapter - Gold, and Kearney FFA Chapter - Silver.

By the 1950-51 school year, Nebraska FFA had 4616 members in 119 chapters.

1952

In 1952 Bryce Anderson-Imperial was awarded the National FFA Farm Electrification Foundation Award.

The FFA Code of Ethics was adopted.

The first issue of "The National Future Farmer" magazine was published. This magazine's name was later changed to "New Horizons".

1953

National FFA celebrated its Silver Anniversary at the 1953 FFA Convention in Kansas City, Missouri.



A Silver Anniversary Pin for the Future Farmers of America. (1953) (Part of the personal collection of the author)

The U.S. Post Office Department issued a special 3-cent postage stamp to celebrate the 25th anniversary of FFA; the cost at that time to mail a first-class letter.

U. S. President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, was a speaker at the National FFA Convention - the first U.S. president to do so.

1954

Gilbert Mattes-Allen was awarded the National FFA Regional Star Farmer in Kansas City.



National Award Winners at the 1952 National FFA Convention in Kansas City, Missouri. Left to Right: Mack Hume, president of the Tolleson, Arizona Chapter. Bryce Anderson, Imperial, Nebraska - Farm Electrification winner, Lewis Earl Britton, Greenville, Illinois - Soil and Water Management winner. Ed Rieser, Walla Walla, Washington - Farm Mechanics winner and Harold Miller, Ancramdale, New York - Dairy Farming winner. (IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives Photograph)

The Nebraska FFA Public Speaking Contest was won by Don Ensminger-Waverly for a Speech entitled "Developing Successful Farmers."

1955

Kenneth Serres-Harrison was awarded the National FFA Regional Soil and Water Management Award.

AK-SAR-BEN Farm Betterment Award program was started. Winners in 1955 were: Jerry Svoboda-St. Paul, Warren Babcock-Auburn, Harry M. Schmit-Columbus, Norman Husa-Barneston, Edward Bracht-West Point, Roy Kai-Pender, Kay Miller-Bassett, Lawrence V. Pokorny-David City, Gary Whitney-Humbolt, Waynard Johnson-Holdrege.

1956

The American Farmer Degree was awarded to six Nebraska FFA members in 1956: Gene M. Atwood-Albion, Ronald E. Damkroger-Beatrice, Charles F. Lewis-Harrison, Rodney A. Sindt-Franklin, Gordon N. Soneson-Holdrege, Laurence Ulmer-Sutton.

1957

Six Nebraska FFA members who were raised to the American FFA degree in 1957 were Norman L. Husa-Barneston, Dean Allen Jensen-Hay Springs, Donald G. Knauss-Cozad, Ronald Gene Larsen-Grant, Kay Miller-Bassett, Kenneth F. Serres-Harrison.

FFA chapters sent 466 FFA members from 92 schools to The Nebraska FFA Camp at Camp Fullerton.

1958

Eugene Jedlicka-Schuyler won the National FFA Regional Farm Mechanics Award.

1959

National FFA headquarters was established in Alexandria, Virginia, on land which was part of George Washington's estate. The FFA had owned the land since 1939 and used it as a national camp.

Two local Nebraska FFA chapters were honored



The cover page of the Victory Convention Proceedings for the 1946 (Post War) National Convention of The Future Farmers of America. Proceedings booklet is a record of the activities conducted at the National Convention each year. (IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives Photograph)

at the 32nd National Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, for their applications for the National Chapter Award program from the 128 Future Farmers of America Superior chapters.

They were Hooper FFA Chapter – Gold Emblem, and Kearney FFA Chapter – Silver Emblem.

1960

Arden Uhlir of the Verdigre, Nebraska FFA Chapter was awarded the Star American Farmer in 1960 at the National FFA Convention. The National Dairy Cattle Judging Contest - Tekamah FFA - Gold Emblem team – Individuals: Jerry Johnson – Gold Emblem, Bill Cornish - Bronze Emblem, Tim Valder - Bronze Emblem.

1961

The Nebraska Crop Farming - Foundation Award started. It was awarded to Merlin Prior - Imperial.

Gary Trago - Sutherland, Nebraska was awarded Regional Star Farmer in Kansas City.

David Everett - North Loup-Scotia, Nebraska was awarded the Regional Soil & Water Management Award in Kansas City.

1962

Robert B. Ruppert – West Point, National FFA

Farm Mechanics Champion in Kansas City.

The National Meats Contest - Pierce FFA Gold Emblem team – Individuals: Leslie A. Klein – Gold Emblem, Arvid Pufahl - Silver Emblem, Charles Pohlman - Silver Emblem.

The National Poultry Contest - Logan View FFA Gold Emblem team – Individuals: Dale Moll – Gold Emblem, Kenneth Meier - Gold Emblem, Ivan Bartling - Silver Emblem.

1963

The Nebraska Livestock Farming - Foundation Award started. Awarded to Roger Hildebrand-Lyman.

Larry Hudkins – Waverly, National Soil & Water Champion in Kansas City.

Herbert Stuthman - Columbus was awarded the Regional Soil & Water Management in Kansas City.

1964

Lyle Nielsen – Creighton, Nebraska was awarded the Central Region Star Farmer in Kansas City.

The National FFA sold its one-millionth FFA

See FFA HISTORY

Continued on Page 52

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Mau earns Star in Agribusiness

“I am very fortunate and blessed to be selected for the award.”

- Carson Mau

By Macey Peterworth

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Carson Mau’s side hustle quickly grew into a thriving business. Initially working for his aunt in the spring of 2020, Mau faced multiple first job challenges. Now, he reaps the reward of his hard work and determination.

As a high school senior at Sutton High School, Carson Mau was awarded the 2024 Nebraska State FFA Proficiency Award in Turf Grass Management and received the Star Award in Agribusiness.

“There are so many amazing individuals in Nebraska FFA that were very deserving, and I am very fortunate and blessed to be selected for the award,” Mau said.

The Star Award is presented to the top SAE, or Supervised Agricultural Experience, which is a project you complete throughout your high school FFA career. Mau says the application process for the Star award is very strenuous yet simple.

Applying for the award became an option during Mau’s senior year of high school. The process consisted of multiple interviews leading him to finally receiving the award on stage at the state convention.

“His passion for his SAE continues to impress community and family members,” Gwenda Mau, Sutton’s chapter advisor and Mau’s mom, said.

Gwenda Mau served as an interim advisor for the Sutton chapter during the 2023-2024 school year when the chapter was without an advisor. Mau said his mom emphasized that there was going to be no wasted talent and that everyone was going to be placed into a position where they would succeed. Gwenda Mau is no longer the interim advisor at Sutton High School, as it now Bailey Ulmer.

“Through the year, I learned that FFA is more than just learning about agriculture, it truly is an or-

Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters



Carson Mau

ganization that is developing future leaders,” Gwenda Mau said.

Mau’s business, Prime Lawn Service, was an idea that Mau brought to his mom in the fall of 2020. Af-

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ter working with his aunt, he felt prepared for the challenge of starting his own mowing business. The first course of action he pursued was getting his name out. He requested his mom post on Facebook asking if anyone around town needed their lawn mowed. This course of action got him eight clients. The next year, Mau hired his first employee and doubled his client list. In 2022, Mau expanded his business by adding more equipment and more employees.

“I didn’t make a lot of money necessarily, but we did grow quite a bit,” Mau said.


At the end of 2022, Mau had up to 40 lawns. Now, he has around 60 lawns and a total of six employees. Mau has lawns that go as far as about ten miles in each direction of Sutton.

Mau has solidified some great advertising for his business since his first year. Every spring, he puts an ad in the local Clay County News and the City of Sutton newsletter. Prime Lawn Service also has an Instagram and a Facebook page to keep clients up to date on the business as well as a daily mowing schedule.

“I enjoy it,” Mau said, “The work we do is great. To be able to be in service to a community that has done so much for me, is awesome.”



Carson Mau sending bills and doing the paper-work side of the business.




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“To be able to do service in a community that has done so much for me, is awesome.”

- Carson Mau

In his sophomore year of high school, Mau applied for the FFA foundation grant program and was fortunate to be the recipient. He used the funds to purchase new equipment and to grow his business further.

“FFA not only helped me with guidance in creating this business, running it, and growing it but also with financial assistance in helping me physically expand the business,” Mau said.

Mau is now a first-year student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and is an agricultural leadership education and communication major with a focus on agricultural education. While away at college, Mau prioritizes his lawn service and insists on

his personal effort to be involved with his hometown business. He is in frequent communication with his employees while they operate Prime Lawn Service back in Sutton. Mau said he still takes calls from clients every so often, but the daily operation is on the employees.

Mau also has full support from his parents as they take on some responsibility for the business.

“I can’t emphasize enough that my parents do a tremendous job in being able to keep everything afloat while I am not physically present,” Mau said.

Well, did you know this?

Facts about Nebraska FFA Alumni history.

By Joe Baldassare

The Nebraska FFA Creed Speaking Contest was established in 1949.

The first winner (1949) was Wesley Lubberstedt, Wakefield. The next six annual winners were: 1950 Bob Beck, Fremont; 1951 Ira Rockenback, Waverly; 1952 David Bacon, Lexington; 1953 Larry Nielson, Minden; 1954 Paul Herman, Wilber; 1955 Mylon Filkins, Creighton



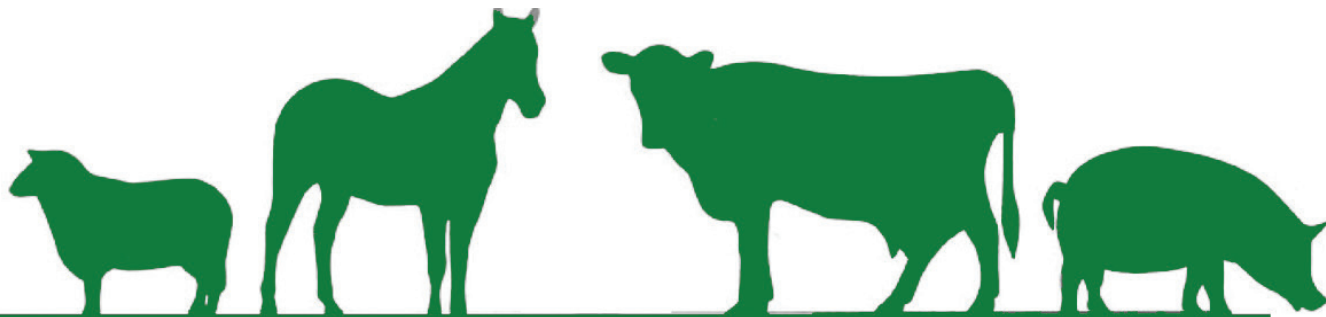


Mau washing and prepping his mowers for another week of work.

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Adyson Groteluschen shows livestock at one of her national shows. Photo courtesy of Adyson Groteluschen.

Community, joy in agriculture

For Groteluschen, FFA leads the way

By Cayla Mentor

Adyson Groteluschen, a freshman at Northeast Community College in Norfolk, Nebraska, is on a mission to make her mark in the world of agriculture.

With a huge passion for livestock and animal science nutrition, Groteluschen's journey has been shaped by her involvement in the FFA program at Lakeview Community High School in Columbus, Nebraska.

Groteluschen grew up on a cow-calf operation just north of Columbus. During her early years, she was exposed to the agricultural lifestyle sparking her interest in livestock and farming.

"I've been around livestock and the farm ever since I was little, and it really inspired me," she said.

Under the mentorship of her agriculture teachers

at Lakeview, Emily Yowell and Kaydie Brandl, Groteluschen was introduced to Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), which is a crucial component of the FFA program.

"Emily got me started on my SAE and everything," Groteluschen said. "She had me keep records on the AET website, and that laid the foundation for my proficiency competition."

After Emily's departure, Groteluschen worked with Kadie Brandl during her junior and senior years, continuing to improve her proficiency and gaining valuable information about professional practices in agriculture. FFA consists of three main components: classroom instruction, leadership development events (LDEs), and career development events (CDEs). Groteluschen said LDEs are opportunities for members or students to practice imperative skills like public speaking and having the opportunity to do mock interviews. CDEs are to prepare students for specific agricultural careers, including livestock judging and hands-on competitions.

"These events help you get ready for the career you want to go into," Groteluschen said.

“That laid the foundation for my proficiency competition.”
 - Adyson Groteluschen

In addition to her academic goals, Groteluschen’s hands-on experience with her family farm has been crucial in shaping her focus for keeping her passion alive. She actively participated in calving and harvest seasons, extending a hand to her community.

“The community just really gets together and helps each other out,” she said.

Her dedication to cattle farming was the beginning of such a burning passion for the industry. She enjoys showing cattle at various competitions, and because of this, Groteluschen shows a good sense of responsibility and pride in what she does.


“Anything I do with the animals, I love,” Groteluschen said. Her commitment to FFA not only improved her technical skills but also instilled leadership qualities in her as an individual. As a senior in high school, she served as the chapter reporter, which is a role that allowed her to contribute to her community even more.



Adyson Groteluschen a freshman at Northeast Community College, poses for a photo. Courtesy of Adyson Groteluschen.

Groteluschen has faced challenges that have shaped her perspective. “These challenges have made me realize how important the people around you are,” she said. The memories from a summer trip

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with her FFA team confirmed the value of relationships and the importance of living in the moment.

Groteluschen could not stop giving credit, where credit was due to FFA.

“FFA has transformed me into a confident leader and the leadership opportunities I have been given have set me up for future internships and job opportunities,” she said. The experiences she gained through livestock judging and farm management opportunities have provided a real glimpse into what her future career will look like.

Looking ahead, she has set plans for her agricultural career. After completing her first college program at Northeast Community College, she has plans to transfer to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to major in animal science nutrition. She hopes to manage a feedlot and expand her own cow-calf operation, primarily focusing on breeding purebred livestock to support other producers in her community.

“I want to help other farmers with their cattle nutrition and operations,” she said.

Groteluschen said she believes that FFA plays a vital role in providing a sense of community and joy in agriculture. “Our older generation was really strong and active in FFA, which drives us younger

“When you join FFA, you are joining a family. Make the most of every opportunity. Those competitions and events are crucial for your future.”

-Adyson Groteluschen

folks to be as passionate as they are,” she said.

For those considering joining FFA, Groteluschen offered some valuable advice: “When you join FFA, you are joining a family. Make the most of every opportunity. Those competitions and events are crucial for your future.” This piece of advice resonates well with the core values of FFA: education, leadership and community support.

As she embarks on her journey at Northeast Community College, Groteluschen is the perfect example of the amazing impact of FFA on young leaders in agriculture. With a strong foundation built on experience and mentorship, she is going to contribute significantly to the agricultural industry and inspire others along the way, without a doubt.



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Lakeview FFA

Meet the Council

Tammie Steinhauer

Tammie became involved with FFA when her brother, Tom Hofmann, moved back to their hometown of Sutton to become their ag advisor in the fall of 1993. Sutton's FFA Alumni Organization was then started in 1996. Tammie is still very active with Sutton's FFA Alumni as the treasurer/secretary/event organizer. She became involved with the Nebraska FFA Alumni Organization as the membership secretary in the fall of 2002. She is still the membership secretary and was also elected as a council representative in January 2024. As a council representative she is the chairperson for "The Blue & Gold Spotlight" magazine that is published yearly.

She has been married to Craig for 41 years. They have lived on their farm outside of Sutton since 1986. They have two children, a daughter Brooke Waddell (Jess), and a son Lane (Kristin), and four-grandchildren; Hensley, Halynn, Lucasey and Rush. She has done all aspects of farming, raising cattle, chickens and horses. She is also employed at Perfect Circle Irrigation, works part-time as a cosmetologist and is the church secretary of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sutton.

Although she was never a FFA member herself, she believes that it is one of the best organizations youth can be involved in. Her husband and children were all FFA



members at Sutton. Being a FFA member/FFA alumni member is just what you do when your part of her family.

"Get involved with your FFA Chapter! If you are a student or have a passion for agriculture, become an ag advisor. We need you," Tammie said.

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**Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters
Convention & Awards Banquet, Jan. 17 & 18, 2025
Lincoln, Nebraska**

**Friday, January 17, 2025
8:00 a.m.**

**Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters Council
Meeting**

Scarlet Hotel Meeting Room
2101 Transformation Drive, Lincoln, NE

10:00 a.m.

Registration Packets available in the lobby of
Scarlet Hotel

12:00 p.m.

Tour Scarlet Hotel

2101 Transformation Drive, Lincoln, NE
1:00 p.m.

Tour Innovation Campus

- Nebraska Innovative Studio
- Greenhouse Innovation Center
- Food Innovation Center

3:30 pm.

Tour Sandhills Global

120 West Harvest Street, Lincoln, NE

5:30 p.m.

Presentation by Wackel Farms Wagyu

Crete Middle School
1500 East 15th Street, Crete, NE

(Registration Packets Available)

7:00 p.m.

**Supper hosted by Crete FFA Alumni &
Supporters**

Social time to follow at the Scarlet Hotel

**Saturday, January 18, 2025
8:00 a.m.**

**Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters Annual
Meeting**

Scarlet Hotel

2101 Transformation Drive, Lincoln, NE
(Registration Packets available in Scarlet Hotel lobby)

9:00 a.m.

Saturday morning tours

*(Tour #1 attendees & Tour #2 attendees will switch
locations following 9:00 a.m. tours)*

Tour #1 Duncan Aviation

3701 Aviation Road, Lincoln, NE

Tour #2 Food Bank of Lincoln

1221 Kingbird Road, Lincoln, NE

12:30 p.m.

Lunch hosted by Malcolm FFA

10002 NW 112th Street, Malcolm, NE

(Registration Packets Available)

Luncheon Guest Speakers

- Nebraska FFA Officer Team
- Student Teacher Scholarship Recipients
- Leadership Scholarship Recipients

2:00 p.m.

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Pre-Banquet Social

James Arthur Vineyard
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6:00 p.m.

Awards Banquet

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Dinner

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Late Registration Fee - \$50.00 – January 1 - January 12, 2025

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Hotel Reservation Deadline - December 20, 2024



Conference Schedule Subject to Change

Registration Form

Return by January 12, 2025

Name(s): _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____
Email: _____

Which FFA Chapter, FFA Alumni & Supporters Chapter, or Agri-Business do you represent?

I am:

- An FFA Advisor
- An FFA Alumni/Supporters member
- An agri-business representative
- A supporter of the FFA program
- Other

I will attend the following (choose all that apply)

- Friday 12:00 p.m. Tour Scarlet Hotel
- Friday 1:00 p.m. Tour Nebraska Innovation Campus

- Friday 3:30 p.m. Tour Sandhills Global
- Friday 5:30 p.m. Presentation by Wackel Farms Wagyu
- Friday 7:00 p.m. Supper hosted by Crete FFA Alumni & Supporters
- Friday Evening Social at Scarlet Hotel
- Saturday 8:00 a.m. Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters Annual Meeting at Scarlet Hotel
- Saturday 9:00 a.m. Tour Duncan Aviation and Food Bank of Lincoln
- Saturday 12:30 p.m. Lunch hosted by Malcolm FFA Chapter
- Saturday 2:00 Tour Settje Agri-Services & Engineering
- Saturday Pre-Banquet Social

- James Arthur Vineyard
- Saturday 6:00 p.m. Awards Banquet - Havelock Social Hall

Fees

- Early Bird Registration \$40 (November 1 - December 31, 2024)
- Late Registration \$50 (January 1-12, 2025)

Please send Registration Fee to: Brett Nunnenkamp, Treasurer, 1871 Hwy 6, Saronville, NE, 68975 by January 12, 2024

If registering with a paper registration form, please submit form with fee to Brett Nunnenkamp by January 12, 2025

Convention Highlights





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The Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters State Association was recognized as a 100% Life Member State FFA Officer Team at the 97th National FFA Convention. Accepting the award on behalf of the NE FFA Alumni & Supporters was council member Danie Brandl.



The Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters also received a Silver Award for Outstanding FFA Alumni & Supporters State Association for 2023-2024. Accepting the award on behalf of the Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters was NE FFA Alumni & Supporters council president Jill Goedeken.

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Crete continues to grow, strengthen with diverse student population

Members stay engaged

By Emma Smith

The Crete FFA chapter continues to grow in numbers despite it being a diverse community every year.

With a little over 40 active members, the Crete FFA chapter has seen growth within its chapter.

Crete has a very diverse population of about 7,000.

“Most of our students in our chapter aren’t your typical ag kids, which excites me. Some come in having no idea what agriculture is or what it does,” Merza said.

Merza chose Crete because of the learning opportunity for her students and herself.

“We have a very diverse community. Which can scare many people away, but it’s one of my favorite things about Crete. There’s so many cultures and things going on even within FFA,” Merza said. “Seeing them grow and succeed feels so rewarding.”

Merza has taught at Crete Public High School and has been the FFA Advisor for two years.

“I graduated from Lincoln in May of 2023, and I’ve been at Crete ever since,” Merza said. She has played a large role in the chapter. Their meetings

revolve around planning community involvement, practicing for upcoming competitions, and discussing other important matters that come up.

“We try to meet up the first Monday or Tuesday of every month,” Merza said. “A lot of the students are involved in other activities, so having meetings at night can make it difficult for them to attend. It is also harder for students who rely on certain transportation to and from school,” Merza said. This is why Merza has started having meetings during the school day.

The members are constantly staying engaged with the community. Merza said they do their annual Back-to-School Burger Bash, trash pickup, and testing water samples. The Burger Bash is to gain new members and help them see what FFA is about.

To be in the FFA chapter at Crete, Merza said that , students must take at least one agricultural class during the school year. The school pays for the students’ dues and the Alumni Chapter pays for the student’s jackets.

Merza credits the alumni chapter for all its support in helping grow the chapter. The FFA alumni chapter is full of supporters who can help their local FFA chapter. Greg Hollman, the president of the alumni chapter, said that their main goal is to assist in any way they can. They have organized numerous



Alex Eltze, Wyatt Gallagher, Josiah Harrington, and Nick Eltz made up the Natural Resources team that placed 5th at the State Convention.



Member Addison Meinke helping host the annual petting zoo.

fundraising events that go to the Crete FFA chapter.

Their biggest hit is a raffle at the local premium auction at the Saline County Fair. A donkey basketball tournament is another big hit they try to put on every other year. "Not only do we raise money from it, but everyone gets a good laugh," Hollman said. "My stomach was sore for days after it because I laughed so much."

The alumni chapter also supplies the meat, cooks, and serves it at the annual Burger Bash. "We want to help out as much as possible," Hollman said.

They buy the FFA jackets with the fundraising money and give out scholarships and help pay for the National Convention in Indianapolis. Hollman's goal is to one day pay for 100% of the fee for each student in the chapter so they can attend.

The alumni chapter likes to meet every month to organize all of the events that take place during the year. Hollman said more than 50 people are involved in the alumni chapter. He encourages everyone to join FFA with the opportunities it gives students.

"It helps immensely with leadership and public speaking," Hollman said. "There's so much you can learn from and use in your everyday life."

The Crete chapter continues to make achieve-

ments inside and outside the classroom. The diversity among the students has been used to encourage them to step out of their comfort zone when learning about agriculture. They have gained personal connections as well.

"I love walking around school and seeing FFA members hanging out with each other," Merza said, "Seeing them together during their off periods or hearing them make plans for the weekend is really cool."

The opportunities in FFA are endless.

"FFA gives students a rounded experience. Learning leadership skills, applying what we've learned in the classroom, and seeing other people getting involved. It benefits so many students," Merza said.

"There's so much you can learn from and use in your everyday life."

-Greg Hollman

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We support Nebraska Youth in FFA and know the Future of Agriculture is in great hands.





Knapp receives his State Star plaque at the State Convention. Pictured (L-R): Dave Ference,- Johnny Ference, Jay Knapp, Kay Knapp, Adam Knapp and Mike Egger, Syngenta representative.

Knapp carries on farming legacy with Star in Agriculture Production

By Kathrine Hutchison

Farming is in Adam Knapp's DNA. His family has been farming in Valley County for over 100 years, growing crops and raising cattle, and he has already carried on that legacy. Recently, he was presented with the Nebraska State Star in Agricultural Production.

According to the Nebraska agriculture education website, the State Star in Production is designated for a student who runs an entrepreneurship program in production agriculture. Knapp has been involved with FFA since he was in the seventh grade at Ord High School. He started working on the project that would win him the State Star his freshman year of high school.

Knapp's project involves renting out farmland to grow crops and raise cattle. It started small, but it has now grown to 208 acres of farmland and 60 head of cattle. Knapp said it was hard work, but the

"It's something I really enjoy and I'm passionate about. I really love being in production agriculture and farming....just seeing a crop grow."

-Adam Knapp

payoff was worth it.

“It’s something I really enjoy and I’m passionate about,” Knapp said. “I really love being in production agriculture, and farming, and just seeing a crop grow.”

Knapp said he felt very fortunate to have the chance to start this project.

“I was really lucky and blessed to have the opportunity to farm ground,” Knapp said. “Not a lot of people have that opportunity, especially my age.”

David Ference, who was Knapp’s FFA advisor in at Ord, said he was very proud of Knapp’s achievements.

“It’s one of the proudest accomplishments I’ve ever seen a student get,” Ference said, “It’s a very, very challenging place to be, but when it comes to it he’s going to farm, and he’s going to feed a lot of people.”

Agriculture is a large part of the culture in Ord. Both Knapp and Ference said that the support from the community was extremely helpful as Knapp was starting the project and the application process for the State Star.

The application process for the State Star in Agricultural Production took several months to complete. There were multiple stages, including speaking to district judges, state judges, and completing

“It’s one of the proudest accomplishments I’ve ever seen a student get.”

-David Ference

a final interview at the state level.

“I was definitely nervous, but at the same time, if you really prepare for something and you’re ready for something, you’re not going to be too terribly nervous,” Knapp said.

The nerves didn’t fully hit Knapp until he was on the stage waiting for the results to be announced.



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“Once I was going up on stage with the other three people that were competing against me, that’s when I got nervous. It kind of hit me that this was actually here, and I was really excited when my name was called. It was just kind of a rush.” Knapp said.

Knapp is currently a freshman at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, majoring in agricultural business. He said he highly valued his time in high school FFA.

“FFA was kind of my only extracurricular activity, and I really enjoyed it.” Knapp said. “We had a really good chapter in Ord, so that helped, and really good advisors. I had a lot of fun.”

Knapp said that he encourages current high school students to try as many activities as they can until they find something that sticks.

“Advice for anybody that’s a freshman; just do everything you can. Be in all the sports you can be in. Try them all out. Be in FFA. Try out all the competitions at least once.” Knapp said.

Knapp also encouraged other students to work hard once they find those passions.

“Show up, put in the work and learn as much as you possibly can all the time.” Knapp said. “A lot of the things you get, you have to work for. So, you’ve got to create those opportunities.”

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Meet the Council

Danie Brandl

Hello, my name is Danie Brandl. I am the agricultural educator and FFA advisor at Elm Creek High School.

I am originally from Humphrey, Nebraska. I graduated from the University of Nebraska with undergraduate degrees in Applied Science and Agricultural Education. I received my master's in applied science from UNL in August.

I have a passion for FFA, and all the opportunities students gain from being a part of the organization. I also enjoy seeing the growth of the students from the beginning of the year to the end of the year at the chapter banquet.

My favorite memory in FFA is taking students to State Convention and cheering them on through their successes in contests.



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Four Fairbury FFA members earn American Degrees at Nationals

By Trinity Wales

“This is a pretty big honor for them, because it definitely takes a lot of work and a lot of diligence to really complete this degree,” said Thomas Dux, Fairbury FFA chapter advisor, about the four students who achieved American FFA degrees after graduation.

The students, who went through a rigorous requirement process before receiving the degrees at the National FFA Convention and Expo are now pursuing secondary degrees at their respective colleges.

Emily Huss, Connor Gerths, Brittany Kroeker and Brendon Runge all graduated with the Fairbury High School class of 2023 after getting prerequisite degrees needed to earn the American FFA degree, something that took them many years of work including dozens of community hours, academic discipline, and in some cases birthing cows.

“Once they get that chapter degree, they apply for their State FFA Degree,” said Dux, who oversees awarding Chapter degrees, a smaller, but necessary step for gaining higher level degrees such as the State and American degrees. While its qualifications have lower stakes, it is no less important, said Dux, as four students who got the American degree first needed their chapter degrees. The State degree which comes next, requires even more work.

“That one does get pretty intense,” Dux said.

The next step needed to qualify for the American FFA Degree. Dux helps monitor students during this process to ensure they’re meeting the conditions needed.

Dux said the students have a lot of responsibility when working towards this, like keeping records of their activities, paychecks and hours worked.

To further expand, students need at least 25 hours of community service, SAE earnings of \$3,500 and hours that qualify depending on circumstance, according to the official Nebraska FFA website, which lists many other requirements as well. SAE, which stands for supervised agricultural experiences, is the official term for hours done during enrollment in FFA and is monitored by FFA officials. Students who complete the objectives of the State FFA Degree then begin the process of getting the American FFA Degree, the last and highest-ranking degree in the hierarchy.

“This is the most I’ve ever had in one year, I just had a really good group of kids,” Dux said. This ac-

“It definitely takes a lot of work and a lot of diligence to really complete this degree.”

- Thomas Dux

complishment does not come lightly, as Dux has been involved in FFA for 14 years, 10 of which were at Fairbury High School.

The first student, Huss, was involved in the selling of green peppers, as well as a breeding program, where she assisted with the calving process. Gerths, another student, did hours working at a local Orscheln Farm and Home and mowed lawns for the state of Nebraska. Kroeker worked at Kroeker Farms and also assisted in the calving process. The final student, Runge also assisted in the calving process to meeting his service hours.

The students, who are now all in college, are for the most part pursuing fields that work with farming or animals. Huss is attending the University of Nebraska Omaha for biology where she also plays volleyball, while Gerths is studying animal sciences at the University of Nebraska Lincoln. Kroeker is working under a John Deere Technology program at Southeast Community College, and Runge who is also attending UNL is a history major, all according to Dux.

“I think all of them, pretty much are doing something close to an agriculture major,” said Dux when

“I just had a really great group of kids.”

-Dux

asked how he thought the students’ participation in their local FFA chapter influenced their secondary education. While their participation might not have been the biggest inspiration for the students pursuing careers in the agricultural field, having access to a program that gave them opportunities to achieve multiple degrees shows both the importance of having FFA available to students, and their own commitment to obtaining the degrees themselves, a high, record breaking honor for Fairbury High School.

Scholarships

Matt Scholz, Awards Chairman
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Recognition for the support you give Agriculture Education and the FFA is just an application away. Each year the Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters recognizes those individuals and chapters who go above and beyond in their support for their FFA programs. All application forms are available at nebraskaffaalumni.org. Awards Chair Matt Scholz is just an email or phone call away if you have any questions. Awards Applications must be submitted to Matt by December 30, 2023.

Outstanding State Affiliate

Our application allows local alumni affiliates to showcase their year's achievements. These applications are ranked GOLD, SILVER, and BRONZE, with the top two GOLD rated chapters being forwarded on to our National FFA Convention to represent the state of Nebraska.

Robert "Bob" Clausen Outstanding Achievement

Nominees must be active in their local or state alumni affiliate, demonstrate effective leadership skills, and mirror the passion for excellence that warrants recognition. This honor is given to a select number of individuals each year who have provided their time talent, and treasure to ensure the growth of agricultural education.

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Being our most prestigious award, the Nebraska FFA Alumni selects one person each year to recognize for their service. Individuals who have made significant contributions to Nebraska agriculture, agriculture education, Nebraska FFA and/or FFA Alumni and Supporters are eligible for this award. Nominations are not limited to current Nebraska FFA Alumni members, but may be individuals outside of the Alumni Association.

Leadership Conference Scholarship

The Nebraska FFA Alumni & Supporters are proud to support FFA chapters and members who express the desire to further their leadership skills and abilities. There are many opportunities through FFA to build both students and chapters' abilities to be effective leaders within their communities. Any conference workshop, or event oriented towards leadership will be considered for this scholarship.

Applications for these awards and scholarship are available on our website nebraskaffaalumni.org. Deadline for the applications is December 30, 2023. We encourage every Alumni & Supporters Chapter to apply for these awards and the scholarship.

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Scholarship recipient Abigail Lutjelusche

Hello, my name is Abigail Lutjelusche and I am from Richland, Nebraska! In 2021, I graduated from Lakeview Jr/Sr High School before attending the University of Nebraska–Lincoln to study agricultural education–teaching. Currently, I am student teaching at Humphrey Public Schools under Robyn Graham. At Humphrey, I am able to teach amazing students in a variety of classes while growing as an educator, FFA advisor, and professional.

Throughout my time in high school, I was blessed with several amazing agricultural education teachers who exposed me to agricultural education as a career. The impact my ag teachers had on my peers and me was deeply evident and I have wanted to create that same experience for future youth

ever since. Further, the agriculture industry has always been of the utmost importance to me. Now more than ever young people need to be educated about agriculture, its importance, and how it impacts their everyday lives. Serving as an agricultural education instructor allows me to educate youth about ag while simultaneously positively impacting them. There's nothing better that I could hope for in a career.

I cannot express my gratitude for receiving the Student Teaching Scholarship from the Nebraska FFA Alumni enough. It's no secret that student teaching can be a financially stressful time for students. This scholarship has aided me in paying my tuition this semester, relieving me of financial burden, and thus allowing me to



Abigail Lutjelusche

focus on becoming the best educator I can during my student teaching experience.

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Meet the Council

Tom Hofmann

Tom Hofmann grew up on a diversified farm east of Sutton.

He graduated from Sutton in 1984 and UNL in 1989. Tom began his teaching career at Pawnee City from 1989-92. As he continued to grow as an educator, Tom taught at Ansley from 1992-93, Sutton from 1993-2010, and High Plains from 2012-present.

In addition to teaching agricultural education and FFA advising, Tom has coached junior high track and basketball, high school football and high school basketball.

Tom and wife Lynn both teach at High Plains. Their four children are passionate about livestock and FFA.

Austin and Brittney currently work in the agricultural industry, and Peyton and Rylee are Juniors at High Plains and have experienced success showing livestock and competing in district and state LDE and CDE contests.

During Tom's career, he has focused on building strong community relationships by providing students a true "classroom without walls" experience. The High Plains Ag program currently has a greenhouse, animal lab, 10-acre land lab, CNC plasma table, Laser Engraver, and a one tower pivot, all of which are used to help students gain hands-on experience in their classes.

Throughout his stint as an FFA advisor, Tom has had incredible students who have achieved FFA and career successes at many levels. These successes are highlighted by 7 State FFA officers, 167 State FFA degree recipients, 110 American FFA degree recipients, 2 National FFA Stars in Agribusiness, 17 State Proficiency winners, and 3 National Proficiency winners.

Tom has been active in the NAEA, NAAE, NVAF, and FFA Alumni serving in different leadership positions. He received the NAEA outstanding teacher award in 2003 and outstanding program in 2005. In addition, he is currently serving on the Polk County Ag Society board.

Tom thanks everyone from family to colleagues who have inspired him to grow both personally and professionally.

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Tom Hofmann with his two daughters, Peyton and Rylee Hofmann. Both girls are in High Plains High School's FFA Chapter.

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Mead farmland gives FFA students experience with alumni help

By Connor Colvard

Outside of Mead Public Schools, there are nine acres of farmland right next to Highway 92. This isn't any old field, however. These nine acres are tented by Mead FFA alumni. The alumni volunteer their time to take care of the crops grown here. These responsibilities include planting, spraying and harvesting, sometimes while volunteering their own equipment, as well.

The farmland was bought sometime in the 1990s by Mead Public Schools. The Mead School Board then delegated the responsibility of tending to the farmland to the alumni.

Originally, Mead's FFA chapter used the space as a test plot for seed corn. For the last two years, it has been planted as a Becks Hybrid Crop by Dickies Seed and Feed. The company has been around since 1937 according to its website, though in recent years it's been owned by Tim Dickies and his son Caleb Dick-

ies. Both of whom are FFA alumni and Caleb Dickies is even a graduate of Mead Public Schools.

As for what they grow, this year the Mead FFA alumni used one half to plant corn and the other half to plant soybeans. Usually they rotate between corn and soybeans every year. The grain they produce is then sold at their local Cooperative, Frontier Cooperative. The profits go back to Mead's FFA chapter to fund student activities and their agriculture program. They also fund scholarships and trips to national and state FFA conventions.

"I know the alumni chapter feels very fortunate to have the land to farm to raise money for the FFA chapter," Mead agriculture teacher Cole Blomendahl said.

It is not just alumni who are using the plot, either. Local FFA students get a chance at some hands-

See MEAD ALUMNI HELP OUT,
Continued on Page 50



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Career Academy shows the way

By Autumn Rhein

Thirteen field trips this year helped students in an ag occupations class get the lay of the land.

The Lincoln Career Academy is a place where students choose what classes they want to take based on what they want to do in their futures. There are many pathways for the students to choose from. Projects are another big aspect of the career academy.

Nicole Sorensen, the ag instructor at Southeast Community College and teacher at the academy, said the idea for the career academy was a push for LPS to help students be better prepared for post-secondary instruction, or to choose a trade career to get into the workforce sooner.

The Lincoln Career Academy is a collaboration between Lincoln Public Schools and Southeast Community College. Students choose a pathway that reflects their career interests. Overall, there are 14 pathways such as criminal justice, culinary, health science, early childhood, and more.

Sorensen said the pathways work a little differently than on a regular school day.

“Students can choose between a morning, mid-day or afternoon class to attend,” Sorensen said. “A

class usually takes up 4 periods of their 8 periods between the students traveling and the two-hour long class meeting. They take 2-3 classes a semester in their pathway classes along with their regular LPS core classes.”

Pathways include coursework, core LPS coursework and clubs/additional activities if the students choose to do them. Some clubs that are offered are FFA, Skills USA, HOSA, and other academic clubs.

Sorensen is a teacher at the Lincoln Career Academy, and it is her first year there. She teaches agriculture classes for SCC which is college credit. She currently teaches animal biology, agricultural career exploration, companion animals, introduction to horticulture, crop sciences and greenhouse management.

The agricultural classes have been working on project like growing poinsettias for a Christmas plant sale. They are also touring Lauritzen Gardens in a few weeks to see the plant varieties and their differences.

Ag occupations are exploring the different pathways of agriculture and what jobs are available. They have toured Scatterjoy Acres, Capital Humane Society, Sandhills Publishing, and Pine Lake Golf Course.



Hardwork earns Johnson State Star in Agricultural Placement

By Anna Mayes

Makayla Johnson was waiting anxiously for that one announcement. She had been waiting for this for the last five years. Thoughts raced through her head about everything that she went through to get to this point.

Johnson, from the small town of Hildreth, with a population of 329 people, desperately wanted to do great things in the world of FFA. With her family having generations involved in agriculture, this was in her blood.

She got started in the program in eighth grade, then went on to become an officer the next four years: reporter; freshman year, vice president; sophomore year, and president; junior and senior year.

Johnson graduated from Wilcox-Hildreth Public Schools in 2024. Her former advisor, Kassie Faimon, said Johnson left big shoes to fill.

“I did proficiency as a junior,” Johnson said. “I went through that, and I won state in proficiency review and competed at nationals last year and won bronze.”

Gradie Johnson, a friend of M. Johnson’s, convinced her to compete in Star after he did himself. She put in the work, and she was able to interview at both district and state levels.

M. Johnson worked at Central Valley Irrigation as part of her project for her supervised agricultural experience (SAE). She started working there as an eighth grader, and she has been there ever since.

“I logged all of my hours throughout the summer. In the project, I talked about everything I’ve done, and I put it into an online record-keeping system,” Johnson said. “It took a lot of time putting everything in there and being able to explain it all. Most students just put in what’s required.”

Her favorite thing to do at the company was sorting, loading, and hauling corner machines.

“That was just really fun,” Johnson said. “I started doing that as a sophomore, and being put under pressure is something I enjoy.”

She also reflects on what it took even after her project was completed. Makayla’s project had to get past the district and an interview. Then she had to turn in the project at state competition level. At state,



Johnson shows off her State Star Award in Agricultural Placement. She now attends Hastings College studying business administration.

several people review the submitted projects and comb through them thoroughly. The panel chooses ten finalists that will have to go through an interview over their project. M. Johnson realizes that even if she doesn’t continue to the next level, she should be proud of how far she has come.

“I’ve accomplished a lot,” she said. “I should not beat myself up if I don’t make finals or get an interview.”

Faimon added that M. Johnson had a good attitude in the classroom as well.

“Makayla was a great student,” Faimon said. “She would be one of those students that led by example, a real go-getter. She had great leadership skills, and she will be a huge leader in the industry for a lifetime.”

Faimon is proud of what Makayla was able to accomplish, and that the former student can represent their smaller organization.

M. Johnson is proud of what she could do as well. “I’ve always wanted to be really good in FFA,” she says. “I competed as a freshman and sophomore. I did well, but others were making it to nationals. I thought that I wanted to do that too. I had that goal, and I wanted to do my best. Being able to compete where I knew I could do my best. I knew once I did

proficiency this is where I would thrive. This is what I will be the best in.”

The former student wishes to encourage people to join FFA. “You don’t have to be a great public speaker or great at horticulture,” she says. “There’s something for everyone!”

M. Johnson knows that she wouldn’t be anywhere without the people in her corner cheering her on. She said she feels very blessed to have this opportunity to live somewhere where she could work on [her project] with an amazing support system.

“I can do this, and I can have a can-do attitude,” M. Johnson said.

Now attending Hastings College, M. Johnson hopes to earn a bachelor’s degree in business administration to hopefully go back and work Central Valley Irrigation in some way. She hopes to keep it as a family business.

“I can do this, and I can have a can-do attitude.”

-Makayla Johnson



Johnson creates valves for wells and center points at Central Valley Irrigation.

The announcer’s voice drew Johnson back to reality as the quick moment was over. He then made her dreams come true by declaring her the Nebraska State Star in Agricultural Placement.



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Meet the Council

Matt Scholz

Matt Scholz is from Crete, he works full time as a mechanical designer at Tuttle, Inc. and runs a cow/calf operation with his wife, Jeana, and sons, Titus and Bennet.



Kenny Reinke

Kenny Reinke is from Neligh. He farms corn, beans, and small grains with his wife and three children, ages 15,14 and 10.

He is also a member of the Neligh-Oakdale school board. Kenny chose to join FFA because it gave him the opportunity to compete with his peers and gain knowledge and lifelong skills in high school.

It played a very large role in de-

veloping leadership skills and was a building block of future public and community service.

He became involved with the Alumni organization when the task of trying to restart the local FFA chapter began. He continues to support the FFA, ag students, and teachers because of the legacy and leadership of the organization.



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The extraordinary kindness of Exeter-Milligan-Friend FFA

Gift card program benefits patients at Medical Center

By Blake Bodlak

While having a uniquely structured chapter comprised of students from two different schools, the FFA Chapter of Exeter-Milligan-Friend is doing extraordinary things in small town Nebraska, including continuing an ongoing tradition of kindness and giving back to the community. Co-advisors Amy Tomlinson and Miranda Segner recently explained one of the exciting initiatives the organization is involved in and what it is they are most proud of for their chapter.

“Our communities have been unexpectedly hit hard with multiple deaths over the past couple of years that have resulted in organ donation,” said Miranda Segner, co-advisor of the EMF FFA chapter and teacher at Exeter-Milligan Public Schools. “So, something unique that the chapter started a couple of years ago is a gift card drive during the holiday season. We then take those gift cards up to the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha. And we meet with organ transplant patients, and we give out the gift cards.”

Amy Tomlinson, co-adviser of the EMF FFA Chapter, explained how before she began teaching at Friend Public Schools, the teacher before her had gotten the donation program off the ground.



ABOVE: Members of the Exeter-Milligan-Friend FFA Chapter meet with one of the organ transplants patients at Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha.

“When I started at Friend six years ago, the teacher before me had started a program in which we gathered donations of things like toys, coloring books, children’s books, et Cetera.”, Tomlinson said. “We’ve moved it and tweaked it a little bit. During COVID the hospital didn’t want physical items like that anymore, so we switched it over to gift cards.”

While the gift card drive began during COVID, students didn’t have the opportunity to go visit the children at the hospital due to the hospital’s restrictions. Those policies changed last year and allowed the students to directly see the effects of their hard work in person.

“They get to actually meet with a child who’s in the process of or has received organs or tissue and then they get to meet with the family too. That’s really impactful for our students. And some of them have even said ‘I need to change my driver’s license over to organ donor now.’”

Even if it might not immediately seem like the gift cards will be helpful for people, Tomlinson said that gift cards of all different kinds are beneficial for

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these families.

“It can be really helpful for families that are flying in and kind of uprooting themselves to a different state,” Tomlinson said. “It can be like an Uber gift card or a Target gift card so they can go buy groceries or anything that they need. We get a lot of Starbucks and Scooters gift cards, and we hear from a lot of the nurses that when they have moms or dads breaking down they can go get a coffee with the gift card to get their mind off of it and enjoy that coffee for an hour or so and take a break. Because it’s a really stressful time.”

All this work that the FFA organization does is even more remarkable because of the unique circumstances under which the organization operates. Unlike most FFA chapters, the EMF chapter is comprised of students from two different schools and three different towns. This is changing next year.

“We are going through a really big transition this year because next year our schools are going to be consolidated,” Segner said. “And so, as we prepare for that this year, our big focus is getting all the kids together. A lot of our contest teams are made up of kids from both schools which is kind of unique. They’re not classmates like most other chapters are. So, this is a really big transition year for us with lots of new things.”

Paul Sheffield, the superintendent at Exeter-Miligan Schools, said this chapter’s setup is particularly special.

“What’s interesting is the uniqueness of two schools coming together to create a program,” Sheffield said. “That has helped with the transition into our schools consolidating together. I think having that FFA program together really helped bring everyone together for the consolidation.”

“It’s a great way for our kids to learn and to enhance their leadership skills.”

-Paul Sheffield

Sheffield is also actively involved in the FFA chapter, supporting them in whatever way he can, including judging contests at the district and state level. “I just think it’s a great way for our kids to learn and to enhance their leadership skills. And it’s a great opportunity to be involved in an activity that’s not athletic,” Sheffield said. “A lot of the emphasis in small schools is placed on athletics and this is an opportunity for our kids to shine whether it be in leadership development or career development or if they’re welding

or something like that. It’s a way for those kids to shine also. That’s why we like having the program.”



Above: Members of the EMF FFA give gifts to UNMC patients and their families. Students can now hand deliver the gift cards, after the change on COVID-19 restrictions.

Mead Alumni help out

[Continued from Page 42](#)

on experience. They’ve been involved in activities like taking soil samples and estimating crop yields, as well as planting and harvesting. Students also have used the crops in the county and state fair. The plot was even once used for a corn maze.

“Our FFA chapter enjoys the hands-on element of the field as well as the financial support to attend state and national convention,” Blomendahl said.

FFA exists to help students hone important skills for their future careers. This farmland is a testament to that idea. For over 20 years now, this farmland has been tended to by FFA alumni using the skills they have learned. In turn, students can learn these same skills and gain experience. All the while, the crops grown help to support Mead’s FFA chapter and continue forging the next generation of agriculturalists.



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Apply for grant funding or learn more about the program at GiveBacktoYourRoots.com.

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FFA HISTORY

Continued from Page 17

jacket.

Nebraska FFA enrolment was 5532 members for the 1964-65 school year in 121 chapters.

1965

Due to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which mandated the end of segregation; the National Farmers Association merged with the FFA, resulting in the end of NFA after 30 years of providing agricultural leadership development for rural black male youth.

The addition of the over 52,000 former NFA members raised the total National FFA membership to approximately 454,000 members in 10,000 chapters.

Delegates for Nebraska to the 1965 National Convention were Lawrence Kuhlmann - North Platte and Kenneth Nagel – Lincoln.

The Nebraska FFA Public Speaking Contest was won by Vic Bohuslavsky-David City, for a speech entitled “I Am a Farmer.”

Adult leadership for the Nebraska State Fu-

ture Farmers of America, during the years reported by this article (1945 to 1965), was provided by the Nebraska Department of Education.

Nebraska State FFA Advisors

- **L. D. Clements – before 1945-1949**
- **L. E Klein - Dec. 1, 1949-50**
- **Harold F Duis - Oct. 1, 1950-59**
- **Glen Strain - Apr. 1, 1959-65**
- **B. E Gingery – 1965 - after 1966**

Nebraska State FFA Supervisors

- **Howard W. Deems - before 1945 1949**
- **L. D. Clements – 1949-50**
- **Elvin Schultz – 1950-52**
- **W. D. Lutes – 1952-53**
- **C. A. Cromer – 1954-65**
- **Roy W. Equall – 1965-after 1966**

Although agriculture education programs and the National and Nebraska FFA made great strides during these years to meet the needs of agriculture education students and FFA mem-



bers, they were focused primarily on teaching skills for production agriculture careers to farm boys.

The substantive changes to programs in

focus, technology, curriculum, and diversity of students and their careers were yet to come during the next several decades.



Honorable Robert S. Kerr, United States Senator from Oklahoma, and Honorable Harry S. Darby, former United States Senator from Kansas, present a Federal Charter, which was granted by Congress to the Future Farmers of America. Walter Cummins, National President of the FFA received the Federal Charter at the National FFA Convention in Kansas City Missouri 1951. (IUPUI University Library Special Collections and Archives Photograph)

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Well, did you know this?

Facts about Nebraska FFA Alumni history.

By Joe Baldassare

These Nebraska FFA Alumni Members served on the National FFA Alumni Council in past years.

Dr. Ted D. Ward, (1976-1979)

Dr. O. S. Gilbertson, (1979-1980, Teacher Education Representative 1980-1982)

Alfred Sick, Jr. (member-at-large 1981-1984)

Gary L. Maricle (Central Region Representative 1983-1984, Vice-President and Central Region Representative 1984-1985, President and Central Region Representative 1985-1986)

Kelli L. Evans (National FFA President 1987-1988, Past FFA President 1988-1989)

Dana Soukup (National FFA President 1988-1989, Past FFA President 1989-1990)

Barry Anderson (member-at-large 1997)



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