



Leadership. Tradition. True Blue.  
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 402.472.5224  
[www.neffaoundation.org](http://www.neffaoundation.org)

**It's easy to find a good reason to contribute!**

If you believe in FFA, it's easy to find a reason to show your enthusiasm with a contribution that will benefit Nebraska FFA statewide as well as local FFA chapters. There are many ways to support the Nebraska FFA Foundation including:

**Awards & Recognition**

Designate your dollars to specific proficiency awards, leadership skills events or career development events. This is a great way to support an area that is important to your business or to you personally.

**Nebraska FFA Jacket Fund**

A \$75 contribution provides an FFA jacket and a tie or scarf to a Nebraska FFA student. Imagine helping a young person proudly wear the iconic blue corduroy!

**General Fund**

You can provide support for the Foundation's year-round efforts to support agricultural education, sustain relationships with current supporters, and broaden our base of support among individuals and organizations.

Discover the complete list of giving opportunities for sponsorship and support at [www.neffaoundation.org](http://www.neffaoundation.org).

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# True Blue SPRING 2011 NEBRASKA **news**

## Thank You for Helping Build Nebraska FFA

As I finish my six years of service on the Nebraska FFA Foundation Board, I have to reflect on the tremendous changes I have seen in the Foundation. When I started, volunteers did all the work of the Foundation. We knew we needed a full time Executive Director if we wanted to meet the needs of the Nebraska FFA program in the future.

Tammy Meyer was selected to be the Executive Director and with her arrival in November 2006 came her enthusiasm for FFA. She had previously worked for the National FFA Foundation and had a number of contacts in Nebraska to help expand the sponsors for Nebraska FFA.

Under her guidance and efforts of the FFA Foundation's full Board of Directors, we are now able to sponsor all of the awards presented at the State FFA Convention and are nearly able to sponsor all activities. In addition, we are helping sponsor many FFA activities that occur throughout the year while assisting with many of the expenses the State Officer team incurs, including their international study experience.

The FFA Foundation Board knows that we all have a responsibility to make sure the Foundation has the resources needed to grow FFA in Nebraska. We would like FFA to be available to every high school student in Nebraska and are encouraged by the five new chapters chartered at state convention this year – and we would like to assist in the development of even more new chapters. There are many ways to maintain a successful FFA program in the state, and the Nebraska FFA Foundation can be a partner in meeting those needs.

Tammy has provided us with a vision of what we can be, as have retiring board members Chris Kalkowski, Mark Knobel and Mark Hastreiter. They helped build a sound base for the FFA Foundation. I am excited for the future of this – of your – organization!

As I retire as President of the Nebraska FFA Foundation, I'm reminded of the progress the Foundation has made the last six years. I thank Tammy and all board members for their service and the sponsors who believe in the future of agriculture by supporting the FFA program. I thank FFA alumni for being involved and, most importantly, I thank the FFA members who wear their blue jackets so proudly.

Thank you all, and I ask for your continued support of FFA in Nebraska.

Keith Olsen, President  
 Nebraska FFA Foundation Board of Directors



Keith Olsen receives his Honorary State FFA Degree from State FFA Officer Alec Ibach.

## Welcome!

Did you know Nebraska FFA had five new chapters chartered at the Nebraska State FFA Convention?

**Here's where they are located:**

### Banner County

Advisor: Bill Gifford  
308-436-5262  
bill.gifford@panesu.org

### Friend

Advisor: Kelsie Heusinger  
402-947-2781  
kheusinger@esu6.org

### Garden County

Advisor: Sarah Placke  
308-772-3242  
sarah.placke@panesu.org

### McPherson County

Advisor: Tim Negley  
308-587-2262  
t.negley@esu16.org

### Morrill

Advisor: Rebecca Cox  
308-247-2149  
rebecca.cox@panesu.org

This newsletter is sponsored by the following companies through the **True Blue** Program:



## Your Support Allows Nebraska FFA Foundation to Reach Many

The Nebraska FFA Foundation enhances FFA programs that positively impact the efforts of the state FFA Association and FFA chapters who prepare young people to become successful adults and community leaders.

With your assistance, the foundation makes a difference for the **142 agricultural education instructors** and **139 FFA chapters** who have more than **6,500 members.**



Just this past year more than 700 FFA members attended COLT (Chapter Officer Leadership Training), 150 attended the PEAK Conference (Pursuing Excellence, Achievement and Knowledge) and more than 1,500 attended IMPACT Workshops. Those programs are directly supported by the Foundation – by you – and members gained valuable skills and experience as a result.

More than 3,500 FFA members attended the convention last month, where foundation sponsors supported all of the programs and awards. It's also where five new FFA chapters were chartered, expanding FFA opportunities to even more Nebraska students. The Jacket Fund, meanwhile, awarded 121 jackets to deserving members in the fall of 2010.

The foundation helps state officers travel the state to conduct workshops with nearly every chapter, as well as backing their international trip – to Argentina in 2011 – where they further broaden their understanding of agriculture and bring that knowledge home to share.

It's easy to see how the \$250,000 of support given by the Nebraska FFA Foundation this past year to FFA members, FFA chapters and the state association provided opportunities for so many.

It's all made possible by generous supporters of the Nebraska FFA Foundation. For that, we say thank you – but let's keep going strong!

So many ways to give... so many reasons why. **THANK YOU** from the Nebraska FFA Foundation!

# Nebraska State FFA Convention Award Winners and Sponsors

Included below are the student and chapter award winners from this year's Nebraska State FFA Convention. Congratulations to all! We also want to recognize and say thank you to all the sponsors who helped make convention and these awards possible.



## 2011 Proficiency Winners and Sponsors

Agricultural Communications–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Shelby Rohlf, Conestoga FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska AgRelations Council

Agricultural Education–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Lukas Fricke, David City FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Department of Agricultural Leadership,  
Education and Communication–UNL

Agricultural Mechanics Design and  
Fabrication–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Marissa Grooms, Valentine FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Kruger Seeds, Inc.

Agricultural Mechanics Energy Systems–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Ethan Petersen, Tekamah-Herman FFA  
Chapter**  
Sponsor: Frank J. Fleecs  
*\*\*Ethan will also receive a \$1,000 College  
Scholarship provided by Frank J. Fleecs*



The Nebraska FFA Association recognized the Nebraska Rural Radio Network with the Distinguished Service Award at this year's convention.

Agricultural Mechanics Repair  
and Maintenance–Placement  
**Andrew Largen, Creighton FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Plains Equipment Group

Agricultural Processing–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Haylie Lechtenberg, West Boyd FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska FFA Alumni

Agricultural Sales–Entrepreneurship  
**Kristen Reiman**  
**West Boyd FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Monsanto

Agricultural Sales–Placement  
**Anders Olson, Tekamah-Herman FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Monsanto

Agricultural Services–Entrepreneurship/  
Placement  
**Andrea Boardman, Heartland FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Maxwell Agri Service LLC

Beef Production–Entrepreneurship  
**Kolin Scheele, Diller-Odell FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Cattlemen  
*\*\*Kolin will also receive a \$500 College  
Scholarship provided by the Nebraska  
Cattlemen Foundation*

Beef Production–Placement  
**Garrett Kahrs, Franklin FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Cattlemen  
*\*\*Garrett will also receive a \$500 College  
Scholarship provided by the Nebraska  
Cattlemen Foundation*

Dairy Production–Entrepreneurship  
**Luke Zeisler, West Boyd FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Associated Milk Producers, Inc. (AMPI)

Dairy Production–Placement  
**Aaron Steffen, Hartington**

Diversified Agricultural Production–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Austin Mann, Crofton FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Corn Board

Diversified Crop Production–Entrepreneurship  
**Ethan Weers, Diller-Odell FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Independent  
Crop Consultant Association

Diversified Crop Production–Placement  
**Matthew Marcellus, West Holt FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Independent  
Crop Consultant Association

Diversified Horticulture–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Ben Kaup, Stuart FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: CF Industries, Inc.

Diversified Livestock Production–  
Entrepreneurship  
**Paul Johnson, Stuart FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Corn Board

Diversified Livestock Production–Placement  
**Doug Larsen, Stuart FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Corn Board

Emerging Agricultural Technology–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Benjamin Trampe, Sumner-Eddyville-Miller  
FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Farmer

Environmental Science and Natural Resources  
Management–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Nathan Kackmeister, Ainsworth FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: CHS Foundation

Equine Science–Entrepreneurship  
**Jentry Qualm, Wheeler Central FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: First National Bank-Lincoln

Equine Science–Placement  
**Joni Qualm, Wheeler Central FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Behlen Country

Fiber and/or Oil Crop Production–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Travis Wallinger, Stuart FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Soybean Board

Floriculture–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Bethany Brittenham, Superior FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska FFA Alumni

Food Science and Technology–  
Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Elizabeth Marquardt, Tekamah-Herman  
FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: ConAgra Foods

## 2011 Proficiency Winners and Sponsors (cont.)

Forage Production–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Jared Krause, Tekamah-Herman FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Bayer CropScience

Forest Management and Products–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Kendra Bretschneider, Rock County  
 FFA Chapter**

Fruit Production–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Angela Haun, West Boyd FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: James Arthur Vineyards and Nebraska  
 Winery and Grape Growers Association

Grain Production–Entrepreneurship  
**Eric Miller, Lyons-Decatur Northeast  
 FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Wheat Board

Grain Production–Placement  
**Alex Brahmaer, Wisner-Pilger FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Aurora Cooperative

Home and/or Community Development–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Haley Harthoorn, Ainsworth FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Rural Radio Network

Landscape Management–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Jordan Brabec, Schuyler FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Wilber-Clatonia FFA Alumni

Nursery Operations–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Jewel Krieger, O'Neill FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Carhartt, Inc.

Outdoor Recreation–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Mackenzie Gibbens, West Holt FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Association  
 of Resources Districts

Poultry Products–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Molly Brandt, Humphrey FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Agriculture,  
 Poultry & Egg Division and Smart Chicken

Sheep Production–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Lauren Ibach, Sumner-Eddyville-Miller  
 FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Sheep and Goat Producers  
 Association and Northeast Nebraska Sheep  
 Breeders Association

Small Animal Production and Care–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Gretchen Kroese, Norris FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association

Specialty Animal Production–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Dillon Ochsner, Sutton**  
 Sponsor: ORK Farms, Inc.

Specialty Crop Production–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Emily Ibach, Sumner-Eddyville-Miller  
 FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Ward Laboratories, Inc.

Swine Production–Entrepreneurship  
**Andy Method, Tekamah-Herman FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Pork Producers Association

Swine Production–Placement  
**Patrick Arkfeld, Lourdes Central FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Pork Producers Association

Turf Grass Management–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Logan Peters, Pender FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: BioGreen

Vegetable Production–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Cody Engelman, Diller-Odell FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Bernard, Jean and Tammy Meyer

Veterinary Medicine–Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Shalyse Ahl, Fairbury FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association

Wildlife Production and Management–  
 Entrepreneurship/Placement  
**Jake Kasselder, Wheeler Central FFA Chapter**  
 Sponsor: Nebraska Pheasants Forever  
 and Nebraska Quail Forever

## Officers elected at convention



Nebraska State FFA Officers for 2011-12 were elected at the recent convention. They will represent FFA and travel throughout the year meeting with FFA members, chapters and agribusinesses.

- Brennan Costello, President . . . . . Gothenburg FFA Chapter
- Vance Heyer, Secretary. . . . . Ainsworth FFA Chapter
- Bethany Blackburn, Vice President. . . . . Rock County FFA Chapter
- Cory Johnson, Vice President . . . . . Burwell FFA Chapter
- Shelby Peters, Vice President. . . . . Red Cloud FFA Chapter
- McKehna Thiem, Vice President . . . . . Crete FFA Chapter
- Emilia Woeppel, Vice President. . . . . Norris FFA Chapter

## 2011 Stars Over Nebraska

Nebraska Star in Agribusiness

**Justin Imm, Ainsworth FFA Chapter**

Nebraska Star in Placement

**Emily Osborne, Central FFA Chapter**

Nebraska Star in Agriscience

**Don Treptow, Mead FFA Chapter**

Nebraska Star in Production

**Tyler Bankson, Hampton FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Syngenta Seeds–NK,  
Garst and Golden Harvest

## 2011 Leadership Skills Event Winners and Sponsors

Creed Speaking

**Jacob Sebade, Pender FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: CoBank

Junior Public Speaking

**Jeffrey Wallman, Freeman FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: CoBank

Cooperative Speaking

**Brandy Reichmuth, Humphrey FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Nebraska Cooperative Council

Natural Resources Speaking

**Morgan Tranmer, Wilber-Clatonia FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Don Maxson  
and Farmers Ranchers Cooperative

Extemporaneous Speaking

**Megan Rezac, Central FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.



Job Interview

**Gretchen Kroese, Norris FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Central Valley Ag

Senior Public Speaking

**Lane Swedberg, Wallace FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Monsanto

Junior Parliamentary Procedure

**Imperial FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Nebraska FFA Alumni

Senior Parliamentary Procedure

**Imperial FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Jack Nemic

Agriculture Demonstration

**Superior FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Agriculture

## 2011 Career Development Event Winners and Sponsors

Overall – Ag Communications

Top Team: **Norris FFA Chapter**

Ag Communications – News Writing Area

Top Individual: **Elizabeth Ehmen,**

**Norris FFA Chapter**

Ag Communications – Press Release Area

Top Individual: **Brookelyn Trampe,**

**Sumner-Eddyville-Miller FFA Chapter**

Ag Communications – Broadcasting Area

Top Individual: **Erica Lewis,**

**Wisner-Pilger FFA Chapter**

Ag Communications – Graphic Design Area

Top Individual: **Kassidy Linabery,**

**Valentine FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Nebraska Rural Radio Network

Ag Issues

Top Team: **Schuyler FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Hoegemeyer Hybrids

Ag Sales

Top Team: **Imperial FFA Chapter**

Top Individual: **Katlin Lang,**

**Superior FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Farmers Cooperative, Dorchester



During the Friday of Convention, more than 100 FFA students participated in a Day of Service. Shown here are some of the students who participated in a Trash to Treasures clothing and household goods drive. Others helped at the People's City Mission and spent time with residents at the Tabitha Care Center.

AgriScience

Top Team: **Tekamah-Herman FFA Chapter**

Top Individual: **Erin Conley,**

**Southern Valley FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: GreenLeaf Genetics LLC  
and Midwest Laboratories

Agronomy

Top Team: **Twin River FFA Chapter**

Top Individual: **Clay Easterday,**

**Eustis-Farnam FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Ward Laboratories, Inc.

Farm Management

Top Team: **Norris FFA Chapter**

Top Individual: **Stephanie Teten,**

**Johnson County Central FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: T-L Irrigation Company

Floriculture

Top Team: **Twin River FFA Chapter**

Top Individual: **Ryan Hanousek,**

**Centura FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Frank J. Fleecs

Food Science

Top Team: **Superior FFA Chapter**

Top Individual: **Levi Schultz,**

**Superior FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Omaha Agri-Business Club

Overall – Livestock Management

Top Team: **Norris FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Novartis Animal Health

Beef Area

Top Team: **West Boyd FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Ken and Laura Smedra

Dairy

Top Team: **Norris FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: FC Stone

## Other State FFA Convention Sponsors

### Ag Technology Awards **Katie Umland, Fairbury FFA Chapter**

Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Agriculture

### Chapter Safety Awards Sponsor: Nebraska Farm Bureau

### Community Development Awards Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Agriculture

### Cornerstone Awards Recipients: • **Curtis Cogswell, McCool Junction** • **Robert Drews, Holdrege** • **Doug Kittle, Aurora** • **Amy Shane, O'Neill** Sponsor: Cornerstone Bank

### Governor's Award of Excellence Sponsor: Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA)

### Keynote Speaker **Josh Shipp** Sponsor: Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau

### Keynote Speaker **Curt Tomasevicz** Sponsor: Nebraska Corn Board

### Leadership Academy Sponsor: NMC, Inc.

### Legislative Breakfast Sponsor: Nebraska Farm Bureau

### Natural Resources Awards Sponsor: Nebraska Association of Resources Districts

### Premier Chapter Awards Sponsor: Nebraska FFA Alumni

### State FFA Degree Sponsor: Farm Credit Services of America

### State FFA Officer Selection Process Sponsor: Consolidated Telephone Company



## 2011 CDE Winners and Sponsors (cont.)

Equine  
Top Team: **Norris FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska High School Rodeo Association and Clausen Acres

Meats  
Top Team: **West Point FFA Chapter**  
Top Individual: **Andrew Ambriz, West Point FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Wimmer's Meat Products, Inc., Jack Nemec, and Jesske Brothers Cattle

Natural Resources  
Top Team: **West Holt FFA Chapter**  
Top Individual: **Cole Gibbens, West Holt FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Association of Resource Districts

Nursery & Landscape  
Top Team: **West Holt FFA Chapter**  
*"Each member of the top team also receives a \$1,000 scholarship from Crader."*  
Top Individual: **Abigael Olson, West Holt FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Crader Distributing Co., authorized STIHL Outdoor Power Equipment Distributor

Overall –Welding  
Top Team: **Gordon-Rushville FFA Chapter**

Welding – MIG  
Top Individual: **Troy Nelson, Gordon-Rushville FFA Chapter**

Welding – ARC  
Top Individual: **Ryan Maly, Central FFA Chapter**

Welding-OXY-A  
Top Individual: **Samuel Sandoz, Elba FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Duo Lift Mfg Co., Inc. and Matheson Linweld

Poultry  
Top Team: **Laurel-Concord FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Poultry & Egg Division and Nebraska Agribusiness Club

Sheep  
Top Team: **Sandy Creek FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska FFA Alumni

Swine  
Top Team: **St. Paul FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Pork Producers Association

Junior Livestock Selection  
Top Team: **Wisner-Pilger FFA Chapter**  
Top Individual: **Carrick Perlinger, West Central FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: The Beel Brothers, LLC, and Midwest Veterinary Services Inc.

Senior Livestock Selection  
Top Team: **Scottsbluff FFA Chapter**  
Top Individual: **Tyler Bennett, Wisner-Pilger FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association

Marketing Plan  
Top Team: **Alliance FFA Chapter**  
Sponsor: Party Time Fundraising and Vivayic, Inc.

## True Blue Moments

As in previous years, several individuals with ties to Nebraska FFA were interviewed by the Nebraska Rural Radio Network for National FFA Week. To listen to these great stories, just go to [www.neffafoundation.org](http://www.neffafoundation.org) and click on News and then Audio & Video.

Thank you to everyone who participated!

Emily Arkfeld	Allen Blezek	Kelly Brunkhorst	Chuck Folken	Dr. Ronnie Green
Katie Gutzmann	Terry Hejny	Corey Huck	Matt Lowery	Tonya Mortensen
Adam Venteicher	Don Wallace	Jerry Warner	Kyla Wize	

## The FFA Jacket: You Can Help

The blue jacket is perhaps the most recognized symbol of FFA. One of the most successful Nebraska FFA Foundation programs involves awarding jackets and an accompanying tie or scarf to deserving FFA members. And you can help!

For each \$75 donation to the Jacket Fund, one jacket and tie or scarf is awarded to a deserving student through an application process. Last fall, 121 jackets were awarded from the 154 applications received, demonstrating a continuing need for this key program.

One supporter who received a thank-you note from a recipient, sent a note back to the student. In it, he provided a few nuggets as to why he supports the Jacket Fund:

*"My FFA education has helped in all of my life. I 'learned by doing' so many skills in shop that I apply to this day." and "Public speaking is such a valuable skill, and I first learned it in FFA. Stick with it! And always be willing to stick your neck out and try something new."*

Please consider supporting the Jacket Fund today so we're prepared to award jackets this fall. Thank you!



Students from the Southern Valley FFA Chapter show off their new jackets that were presented last fall as part of the Jacket Fund.



### Thank You!

We wanted to share with you the results of the I Believe in the Future of Ag Campaign that ended in February. In total, more than \$75,000 was raised to help 40 FFA Chapters in the service area of Central Valley Ag! Checks are being written for the individual chapters to use in the areas of leadership programming, community service activities and innovative projects that support agriculture.

Thanks to everyone who gave to the campaign and to our partners – Central Valley Ag, Monsanto, Land O'Lakes, Rosen's and MicroEssentials/The Mosaic Company.

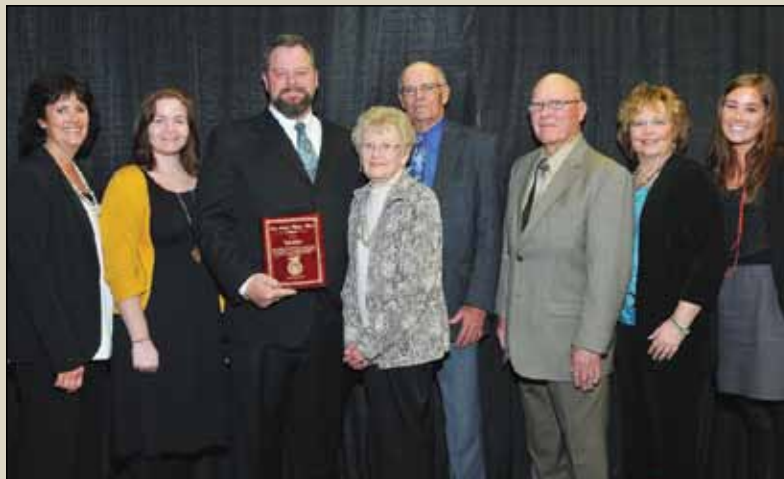
To learn more about the campaign and see who contributed this year, go to [www.neffafoundation.org](http://www.neffafoundation.org).

## Save the Date!

The 17th annual FFA and 4-H Golf Classic will be **June 13 at Quarry Oaks in Ashland.**

This is a fun event that supports two great organizations. For details on how to participate this year, go to [www.neffafoundation.org](http://www.neffafoundation.org).

The 2011 Gary Scharf Helping Hand Award recipient is Wade Hilker, Lakeview High School Agriculture Instructor/FFA Advisor. Wade is shown here with members of the Scharf family who were in attendance for the presentation.



# Academy Puts FFA Members on Track to Be Advocates for Agriculture

Just minutes after 36 Nebraska FFA members learned about handling media interviews they had an opportunity to stare down a mic or into a TV camera backed by a reporter asking questions. An hour later they were learning about working with the state Legislature, then paired with a lobbyist and headed to the State Capitol to discuss key ag issues with their state senator.

That hands-on experience immediately following an educational session was part of the inaugural Ag Issues Academy at this year's Nebraska State FFA Convention.

"Not many young people can say they had an audience with their state senator to talk about important issues," said Willow Holoubek, director of the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska (A-FAN). "That hands-on experience made the Ag Issues Academy effective in helping participants learn to become spokespeople for agriculture."

The Ag Issues Academy was an A-FAN project supported by the Nebraska FFA Foundation through sponsors that included Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Corn Board, Nebraska Corn Growers Association, Nebraska Pork Producers Association, Nebraska Soybean Board and Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc.

The 36 selected FFA members came from a pool of 55 applicants. Before the academy began, participants researched a topic of their choice to explore in depth. Topics included everything from animal welfare legislation to cap and trade to odor and waste management to the use of hormones and antibiotics in beef production.

"Each participant had to review three to five sources for their topic, plus interview someone in their community who has experience with it," said Mat Habrock, field services director for the Nebraska Corn Growers Association. "From that they summarized everything into a dozen or so main points they could use to develop talking points to use at the academy."

Once students arrived, they were immediately thrown into a situation to test their skills. Habrock explained that six students and one "undercover boss" were assigned to tables where the students discussed their chosen topics over lunch. "The undercover boss was a plant, someone who understood the subjects and provided feedback to the students afterward so they could improve their messages. We did this before introductions to really push the participants to overcome being uncomfortable around others," he said.

The introductory session was followed by TV and radio media training with Jason Ellis, an assistant professor of ag journalism from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Then Don McCabe of Nebraska Farmer and Terry Anderson of Midwest Producer provided details on print media. Kelsey Pope of the Nebraska Corn Board and farmer and ag spokesperson Debbie Borg presented tips on social media. Information on how policy is developed and the do's and don'ts of talking with lawmakers was presented by Jessica Kolterman of the Nebraska Farm Bureau.

"It is important that we train young people so they can speak with their peers about food and agriculture. It will help them educate others who may not understand the issues and all the good things farmers do," Holoubek said.



A group of students meet with their state senator to discuss important ag topics during the Ag Issues Academy held during the Nebraska State FFA Convention.



## 2011 – 2012 Board of Directors

### Bob Clausen

*Represents the Nebraska  
FFA Alumni Association*

**Seth Derner**, Treasurer  
Vivayic, Inc.

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GreenLeaf Genetics, LLC

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**Rich Herink**, Vice President  
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Channel Bio

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Farm Credit Services of America

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