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## Nebraska LEAD XXI Fellow/Spouses Dinner

John Owens

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, jowens2@unl.edu

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**Nebraska LEAD XXI Fellow/Spouses Dinner**  
**September 17, 2001**  
**John C. Owens**  
**NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR**

"Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

That quote, by my hero Abraham Lincoln, is one I think all leaders should remember and reflect on regularly in their life, and so I pass it on to each of you. I wish each member of this LEAD group the character to use power wisely, with compassion and integrity, and a strong sense of justice and fair play.

Your presence here tonight shows you are committed to leadership in agriculture and in Nebraska, and I applaud you for that. Strong leadership is much needed; intelligent leadership, leadership able to understand concerns both with the mind and with the heart; leadership willing to roll up its sleeves and get to work, leading by example.

Events in the world today, highlighted by those <sup>TRAGEDIES</sup> that occurred in our own country last week, only underscore a worldwide need for wise, compassionate, concerned, and dedicated leaders, and I urge you to be that kind of leader, wherever and in whatever capacity you lead.

"Example is leadership," Albert Schweitzer told us, and my own experiences confirm it. Most people, I think, are much more willing to pitch in and get things done if we see the person ~~"urging-us-to-do-something"~~ is right there along with us, doing, rather than giving us directions and then going home, leaving us to work!

I congratulate each of you for being selected as a member of LEAD 21. This is ~~"both"~~ an honor and a privilege, offering you ~~"tremendous-opportunities"~~ to grow your own skills and to further develop your talents, to explore ideas and talk with people who have ~~"experiences-and-opinions"~~ that may be far different from your own. I encourage you to learn ~~"all"~~ you can, to approach each experience with an open mind, to get ~~"the-most"~~ out of each opportunity that comes your way. You're here as the result of a competitive, well-thought-out ~~"selection process"~~, and you have ~~"every-right"~~ to feel ~~"proud"~~ of being part of this group. We certainly are proud of you, and it's important that you know that.

This is a major commitment for each you, I know, to take part in LEAD, and I know it is a ~~"commitment"~~ for your family, also. We ~~"thank"~~ your family members for that. We know that people across Nebraska and beyond are looking at ~~"everyone"~~ in this group with high expectations. We think those people investing between \$10,000-\$12,000 in each LEAD fellow have ~~"every-right"~~ to expect a significant-  
return on their investment, and we look forward to ~~"your"~~ very important participation

in various agricultural and other organizations when you complete this program.

We look forward to all you can do and will do in the years ahead, and we look forward to working with you for the betterment of agriculture and Nebraska.

We know that as we consider the future of agriculture we must reach out and explore new options and new ideas, just like the successful Nebraska pioneers did – those pioneers who, when one thing they tried didn't work, tried another, until they found what did work. They didn't waste a lot of time trying to make what they'd always done before work when it no longer did; they sought alternative solutions. You will have significant opportunities to consider new options and new ideas as members of this LEAD group. You'll have opportunities to seek solutions now, and in the future, and I urge you to do that with gusto.

It's always a pleasure, as I travel across our state, to meet alumni of the Nebraska LEAD program who are involved in charting the future course of Nebraska agriculture, contributing to their communities, putting to good use skills sharpened by participation in Nebraska LEAD. I am pleased that IANR has been and remains committed to the Nebraska LEAD program for over 20 years, providing office space and the director, Dr. Allen Blezek, for this program so key to the future of Nebraska.

Allen is recognized nationally by his peers as the "dean" of agricultural

Directors

leadership programs throughout the nation, and I understand the Nebraska program is seen as one of the top leadership programs in the country, for which Allen certainly can take a great deal of credit. We were pleased last Wednesday to see Allen receive the Nebraska AgRelations Council's 21<sup>st</sup> Exemplary Service to Agriculture Award, the group's highest honor, at a dinner in Grand Island. It's always such a pleasure when I get to see good work recognized in such a tangible way.

As you participate in the LEAD program over the next two years I wish you good fortune, much excitement of learning, and everything needed to fan the flame within you that urges you to step forward and become a Nebraska leader. This is an exciting, challenging, productive experience you're part of. I urge you to embrace every opportunity you have, and to take everything you can from this program – and pass it on. Enjoy! Good luck!

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