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Northeast Research and Extension Center VIP Tour

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John C. Owens
Northeast Research and Extension Center VIP Tour
August 21, 2001
Haskell Agricultural Laboratory, Concord, NE

What a pleasure it is to be with you all tonight as we celebrate achievement!
It is always a joy to me to see good-work, hard work, work that matters, recognized.
We certainly had the opportunity to see work-that-matters on today's tour, and I
thank our Northeast Research and Extension Center faculty for all their research and
extension efforts that further our land-grant ^{univ.} mission. I also thank the staff of the
Center for their good work in support of this mission.

We are so pleased that all of you could be with us for the tour, and we thank
you for your support of our Northeast Research and Extension Center and the work
of the University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. We
are pleased to have LEAD alums with us tonight, and I understand we also have
with us members of several county weed districts. Thank you for coming; we are so
pleased you are here.

I want to add my congratulations, Chuck Hassebrook, for this recognition of
your work, for your commitment to agriculture and small- and medium-size farms,
and to the state of Nebraska. Thank you for that commitment.

And as we talk about achievement, and the joy of celebrating it, I also am pleased to celebrate the LEAD – Leadership Education/Action Development – alums “recognized” as VIPs for this tour. Allen Blezek, director of the Nebraska LEAD program, shared with me just a “small sample” of northeast Nebraska alums involved in leadership in the region and the state, as well as “some” of their leadership activities, and I find this glimpse into what LEAD alums are doing so impressive:

*J.D. Alexander, Pilger, president of Nebraska Cattlemen; a past member of the National Cattlemen's Blue Ribbon Committee , and a member of the National Beef Industries Planning group;

*Cecilia Grėvson (GReV – short e sound, not long – SON), Madison, vice chair of the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District as well as committee-person for the Farm Service Agency in Stanton County, and past committee chair;

*Rod Hassebrook (PRONOUNCED LIKE CHUCK'S LAST NAME; CHUCK's BROTHER), Platte Center, past chair of the Nebraska Corn Check-off Board; Corn Industry advisor to the director of agriculture; and a member of the Minnesota Corn Processing “Limited Liability” Corporation Board;

*Larry Mussack (PRONOUNCED MOO SACK), Decatur, chair of the Burt County Farm Bureau; chair of the local cemetery district; chair-elect of Burt-Washington County “Corn Growers;”

*Carmen Patent (PRONOUNCED NOT PATENT, LIKE THE REGISTER, BUT Pa (as in ma and pa) TENT, EMPHASIS ON SECOND SYLLABLE), Randolph, executive director for the Northeast Nebraska Prevention Center for substance-abuse prevention, located in Norfolk;

*Alden Zulke (PRONOUNCED ZUL KE – first syllable Zul would rhyme with hull, as in seed hull – last syllable as in key – with the first syllable emphasized), Brunswick, president of the Nebraska Pork Producers;

*Tim Gubbels (PRONOUNCED GOO BELS), Laurel, president of the Nebraska Grain and Feed Association;

*Larry Sitzman, Columbus, ~~board member and~~ ^{DIRECTOR Nebraska Department of Agriculture} president-elect of the ^{COO} ~~board~~ Nebraska 4-H Foundation; member of the Columbus Chamber of Commerce board of directors; serves with Nebraska Diplomats;

*Mike Korth, Randolph, director, Cedar County Farm Bureau; secretary, Nebraska Soybean Board; just completed a term as state-director of the Nebraska Corn Growers Assn.

Mary Pat Finn-Hoag, (PRONOUNCED WITH LONG O SOUND – HO with G following – not hog as in swine) farm-editor of the *Norfolk Daily News*, is another LEAD alum whose interest in agriculture and in our programs here in northeast Nebraska is much appreciated. Also appreciated is Scott Kincaid, Hartington,

current president of the Northeast Nebraska Experimental Farm Association. I want to thank the Northeast Nebraska Experimental Farm Association for your support and your partnership in co-sponsoring our Northeast Research and Extension Center's yearly VIP tour. What vision members of this association had in the 1950s when they formed to promote locating a research and extension center in northeast Nebraska. Vision is an attribute of leaders, and we thank the 1950s leaders for theirs. We thank you leaders of today, too, for working with us as advisors to our research and extension programs. We welcome your input and appreciate your insights.

Those of you who know me at all know that I am a strong believer in the land-grant university mission, and I firmly believe that the leading object of land-grant universities is to work with the citizens we serve, and to take the resources, riches, and technologies of the university to the residents of the state. I think that when a land-grant university's service to everyday, ordinary people gives way to pursuit of prestige or exclusivity, that land-grant university is in trouble. When constituents are excluded from the process of helping set the direction of experiment station research and extension education programs, land-grant universities are in trouble. I think it imperative that our constituents be involved in the process of planning our research and extension education programs, because land-grant universities that disenfranchise

their local partners "are on the road" to a meaningless, irrelevant existence.

I also think it is "imperative" that we be partners with Nebraska – in fact, we feel so strongly about that in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources that many of our publications carry a short statement that says, "*Partners with Nebraska: Land-grant universities work with the people they serve. NU's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources does so in priority areas of food, agriculture, agribusiness, natural resources, people, and communities. We teach, discover new knowledge through research, and extend that new, unbiased information across-the-state and beyond through extension.*"

I believe it very important that we work "as partners" with other educational institutions in the state, such as Wayne State College, ~~College of Little Priest~~ ^{Tribal College} and Northeast Community College, all, I understand, represented here tonight. It's also important that we work with "governmental entities," and with various organizations, communities, and people, "as well." Working together, we bring so many talents and skills "to the task" of meeting the needs of Nebraska and its residents.

A couple of minutes ago I cited "just a few examples" of what several LEAD alums are doing, and I am very aware that these are "only" a few examples – many more LEAD alums are making many more contributions across the state. But these "few examples" certainly show why LEAD-alums "achievements" are cause to

"celebrate." These are people taking active roles in the forefronts of organizations they believe in, people using their skills ^{their} and talents "to put something back" into the world, people doing work that contributes to agriculture, to their communities, and to Nebraska.

In honoring Chuck Hassebrook and talking about alums of the LEAD program, I think of how ~~lucky~~ ^{FORTUNATE} we are to have "these people" who have stepped forward with a "real commitment" to agriculture and ^{TO} Nebraska. I know LEAD alums ^{and their families} put "a great deal" of time and commitment into participating in the LEAD program, exploring "each person's, and Nebraska's, place in the "global community," experiencing "a diversity" of cultures and opinions, gaining skills in building alliances and coalitions, examining what you think and what you believe. "Thank you" for making that ^{all} a high priority.

As I've traveled from Omaha to Scottbluff in the last eight months, seeking to learn more about Nebraska and what its people identify as "the chief" concerns and challenges facing the state, I've enjoyed my time in both rural and urban areas. And one thing I've decided, as I've talked with "rural people" from one end of the state to the other, is that I would never bet against their tenacity, resiliency, and determination. I believe it equal to the tenacity, resiliency, and determination of the ^{PIONEERS} ~~people~~ who settled, and dreamed, and grew Nebraska. I also believe a number of the

people who can dream and grow "tomorrow's Nebraska" are here tonight. It excites me to think of what all of us, working together, might do.

The late anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*"

Courage and tenacity. Resiliency and determination. The ability to dream and ^{to} work toward those dreams, inspiring others to work toward them, too – these are "qualities" of leaders. These are qualities that change the world, one small group of thoughtful citizens at a time.

Thank you for being here tonight. Thank you for all you do. Thank you, each-of you, for being a cause for celebration.

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