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University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension 2004 Fall Conference

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University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension
2004 Fall Conference
October 19, 2004
Kearney, Nebraska
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

I thought about beginning my time with you this afternoon by asking each of you to turn to the person on your left, shake that person's hand, and say "congratulations" and thank you. Then I was going to ask you to turn to the person on your right, shake hands, and say congratulations and thank you.

It would be one sure way of making sure that each of you is personally congratulated on the successes you've accomplished this past year, and personally thanked for all your good work on behalf of Nebraskans, as well.

I also thought, however, about how some people find such exercises rather painful, whether from a sense of embarrassment or the feeling that if such actions are mandated they don't count, so I decided against it.

Instead, I'll look out at you today and say a personal

“congratulations” to each of you for your successes on behalf of University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in the past year, and a very-personal “thank you” for all the good work you do for your constituents, extension, the Institute, the university, and our state.

In the “hurry” of our lives, it’s too easy to put aside “celebrating” our successes in “our-rush” to pick-up the next piece of work waiting for us. It’s too easy to think people “know” they are appreciated without our saying so. Yet how can any of us know that, “if” no one says it? So I am saying to each of you today – the successes of extension, “both” the individual and the collective successes, are well-worth celebrating. Both the large and the small successes. You certainly are appreciated. Thank you for “all” you do.

You don’t have to wait to hear that from me, or from Elbert, or Beth, DeLynn, or Keith. “You” can say it to each other. I hope you do. You can savor the words from your own constituents, or the unspoken signals that let you know the appreciation really is

there – the face that lights-up when a new concept is learned, the frown that relaxes when knowledge becomes part of a life, the child who enters the conversation after weeks of shy-silence, the happy report of extra-income earned because of extension education, or the knowledge of better family or community relations.

Every now-and-then each of us would do well to stop, contemplate, and then savor the-answer to the question, “How have I made a difference? In both small and larger ways?”

Every now-and-then, each of us would do well to make a call or send an e-mail, or place a hand on a shoulder to remind others how they’ve made a difference, too. And to be grateful for that.

Each year extension’s *Connect* newsletter highlights a few of the diverse successes achieved by extension to benefit Nebraskans. We all know the stories in the newsletter are only the tip of the iceberg of what extension is doing, because eight pages three times a year can tell only a few of the many stories of how you all are contributing to the economy and quality of life

of Nebraska through education. A quick review of this year's newsletters reveals a diverse set of programs benefitting Nebraskans.

For instance, there was the story on educational seminars for the development industry to help participants better understand new federal storm management regulations for metropolitan cities, and to provide knowledge on ways to reduce soil erosion and sediment.

Other stories illustrated how extension is reaching a new-audience through diverse programs ranging from leadership-training for Latino employees at a meat processing plant in Schuyler to nutrition and exercise classes in Spanish in Omaha. There's news of a modified version of the ServSafe food safety courses taught in Spanish in Omaha, and of leadership-opportunities available to Latino students through Nuestro Futuro (Our Future) 4-H in Lexington.

Extension helped livestock-managers learn to properly comply with federal environmental regulations in using manure

as a crop fertilizer. Swine ventilation workshops addressed the principles of airflow in livestock-buildings, and provided knowledge on drafts, cooling, heating, odors, consequences of improper control settings, and more.

Extension's educational-and-collaborative efforts to help bring an ethanol-plant to Plainview were profiled, as was the BRIDGES program in Seward County.

Extension's role in providing education for and coordinating the biosolids-program around Lincoln, where biosolids from the city are applied to nearby farm-fields, demonstrates success. So does the work at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, where extension works with the zoo on entomology-issues that help prevent destruction of exotic-plants in the Lied Jungle and the Desert Dome.

And, of course, there's the extension work conducted when the first case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, was diagnosed in the United States last December 23. Extension was there, over the holidays, with knowledge about the disease and

Web-links for more information.

Youth-work is a wonderful extension success story across Nebraska. In 2003, 27 percent of eligible youth were enrolled in Nebraska's 4-H program, "leading-the-nation" for the highest involvement percentage. That's worth celebrating. 4-H in Nebraska offers more than 150 projects that attract 4-H'ers of diverse-backgrounds. "Connect" carried stories of teens who learned business-skills through the 4-H Business Sense curriculum, the 4-H Tech Team who learned how to set up computer networks for home and small businesses, and 4-H school-enrichment-programs, such as embryology, which in Lancaster County alone in the 2002-2003 school year involved 149 teachers and 3,275 children. You and I "know" those are just a few of the many 4-H successes any-number of you could "recount" for the year. Sometimes we have to stop and recount them to ourselves, just to realize all that's done each year on behalf of Nebraska and Nebraskans.

Chickpeas, or garbanzo beans, led us into a *Connect* story

on work in the Panhandle to provide producers with alternative crops. A story on preparations to respond to potential biosecurity threats in Cuming County that appeared in *Connect* became available for general release after it appeared in the newsletter, and received play in state newspapers, as well.

As I mentioned earlier, I know these stories are only a few of the many examples of extension's successes. The fact that there is so very much more is, itself, cause for celebration. I hope you use your *Connect* newsletter in your community as a "springboard" to make people aware of all that extension is accomplishing across Nebraska. Whether or not there is a story on any of your programs "in a certain issue", the newsletter still can serve as a wonderful-springboard to lead into information about your own programming. With it in hand, you can say to anyone, "I'd like you to see this story on "how Cooperative Extension is helping Nebraska, and let you know that here in this county we are...." And then tell your own story. The newsletter is a tool you're given to use. Please use it. I know you always

can pass ^{story-ideas} you'd like to see featured in *Connect^{on}* to those who write and edit this newsletter. I know for a fact they'd be ^{delighted} to hear from you.

Telling extension's story is important. I said that last year, and I think it's so important I am saying it again today. We must make ^{clear} to our stakeholders ^{the benefits} extension provides - Nebraska. We must be ^{clear} in how those benefits apply in the lives of Nebraskans, and in the lives of their neighbors.

The work you do throughout Nebraska is important, valuable work. Part of that work, part of ^{the job}, is making sure that what extension is doing to benefit Nebraskans is effectively documented and presented so people ^{understand} the value and importance of extension ^{EDUCATION} in their own lives.

Another extension success we celebrate today is the \$9,530,823 in grants ^{and contracts} extension faculty ^{earned} in the past fiscal year, July 1, 2003 through June 30 of this year.

We also celebrate that since July 1, several significant grants already have come extension's way. A Food Safety Grant

from the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative for \$599,983 will assist small meat and poultry processors with interventions for the control of *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat meat products. A research-study on the best^u formulation for *Listeria* control and for maximum^u product-quality^u – flavor and texture – will be followed by extension-workshops to^u teach^u small-processor^u how to use the ingredients.

A \$599,916 Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Assistant^u Grant for small processors – this one, too, from the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative – also will further extension-education.

We celebrate the^u success^u of a renewal of the Building Nebraska Families Grant – \$2,226,983 will come to extension from the first of this month^u through^u September 20, 2007. Building Nebraska Families, with its research-based educational program providing knowledge participants can use to learn to better manage their family-responsibilities as they^u transition^u from welfare to work, began in 1999 in 12 counties. Today, extension

teaches participants in 50 counties. That's terrific growth and educational impact.

This educational program, in cooperation and coordination with the Nebraska Health and Human Services System, has had 587 participants with parental-responsibility for over 1,200 young children. In the first half of this year, 26 families graduated from the program, the average monthly income of those 26 families almost "doubled," and the participants "completed" 883 homework and community volunteer hours.

A new grant-partnership-contract will provide for research and extension education on "Limited Irrigation Cropping Systems for Conserving Water Resources in the Pumpkin Creek Watershed" in the Panhandle. The project aims to demonstrate limited irrigation, no-tillage "cropping-systems" that make the best-use of limited groundwater-supplies. Cropping systems will be designed to maximize economic returns and crop water use efficiency to sustain or to enhance groundwater-levels. Education for farmers, natural resource groups, local, and state government

agencies and related agricultural ~~businesses~~ will provide knowledge on the implications of different management-scenarios for production, cultural practices, economics, and natural resources impacts. They'll also develop economic-scenario case-studies of what individuals and area-businesses might expect as income from different limited-irrigation and cropping-system options.

Another new grant partnership contract is with the Nebraska Indian Community College. "Project Morning Star" is a collaborative project between the college and extension with the overall goal of identifying needs and providing tribal extension, education, and outreach-programming for tribal people to experience positive growth and development. Work will be done on planning and developing tribal extension capacity programming for tribal communities served by the college.

I consider it an extension-success that Dan Cotton, for the past eight years the Director of Communications and Information Technology in the Institute, is on loan from us to lead the

national E-Extension project now under way. It shows both Dan's and Nebraska Cooperative Extension's work in educational delivery through new technology has been noted nationally.

Last year I told you that when I am asked to speak to groups, I often tell them I consider Cooperative Extension the "best out-of-classroom learning-experience ever yet devised. While we have added new-tools to our repertoire for delivering education – Web pages, video-streaming, satellite downlinks are just a few-examples of the tools available to us now – extension remains in the forefront in fulfilling our land-grant university mission of taking the-resources of the university to the citizens of our state. We rely on extension-faculty working throughout Nebraska to relay the needs and concerns you hear from your constituents and communities to us throughout the Institute and university, so we can hear and respond accordingly. We rely on you to be constantly scanning the horizon for future needs, so research activities can begin today to provide the knowledge "necessary to answer the questions of tomorrow. We rely on you

to help us identify new audiences with needs that must be met if we truly are to carry-out our land-grant university mission.

We talk a lot about using high-tech methods of delivery, yet each of us in this room today knows how-important it is that we also are engaged with the public – in direct, person-to-person contact – maintaining and enhancing our credibility and validity. We know the importance of continually building our local-connections to county commissioners, state leaders, commodity group members, businesses, and individuals.

Face it, you're very important people! The fact that you have established that place of importance for extension is its own success, of which you should be very proud.

I also consider you critically-important in helping the university and our own College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources within the Institute, as well as the College of Education and Human Sciences, find answers to a question of importance to all of us, and that is the question of student recruitment. How do we increase enrollments at UNL? In CASNR

and CEHS?

Right now the university faces a \$4 million shortfall in tuition income. Dollars we expected to be there, dollars built into the budget, are not there because enrollments are down. How the university will, in the end, deal with that shortfall in revenue I can't yet answer, but I do know this: It is enlightened self-interest on the part of 'everyone' in this room to help resolve this issue.

I understand from CASNR Dean Steve Waller that every extension educator can offer any prospective student with an ACT score of 27 or higher an \$800 scholarship at any time, contingent upon the student enrolling in CASNR. Remember, that \$800 has to be the *very first* scholarship the student has been offered by CASNR – when offering it to a student you do need to make sure the student doesn't already have a CASNR scholarship offer. That \$800 will be 'applied' against the student's tuition bill.

All educators making that \$800 scholarship offer to students then need to immediately contact Jack Schinstock and Rosalee

Swartz in CASNR with information about the student, so the scholarship can be encumbered and the student's name can be entered in the university's tracking system, if he or she is not already there.

I noted last year that the old saying, ^{"adage"} "the tide that raises one boat raises all boats" is especially true in the Institute. That has not changed. When we have strong enrollments, we have tuition dollars that help cover university budget costs. When we do not have strong enrollments, people may choose to look elsewhere for expense dollars. We cannot forget that undergraduate education is the "first-mission" of the university. Research, teaching, and extension education are closely intertwined in the Institute. We rise and fall together. We must work to rise. Student recruitment is important to all of us. Every one.

I hope while you're here in Kearney, you'll take some time ["]to reflect["] on the successes of your past year, and those you wish to achieve in the future. Extension education matters. I hope

when you see your co-workers succeed, you'll say "Congratulations"
and a JOB-WELL DONE + I HOPE THEY WILL SAY

that to you, also. Each success helps raise the tide. That's good news for extension, good news for Nebraska, and good news for each of us.

Thank you for all you do.

Thank you.