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# Omtvedt Innovation Award Winners

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Omtvedt Innovation Award Winners
December 13, 2004
East Campus Union
John Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

It is such a pleasure to have this opportunity this afternoon to present four Omtvedt Innovation Awards to Institute colleagues whose outstanding work is a source of tremendous pride and inspiration for us all.

As we present these awards we are reminded of how all major parts of our land-grant university mission – teaching, research, and extension education – contribute to the well-being and advancement of Nebraska and Nebraskans. The three missions are so closely intertwined within the Institute that each rises and falls with the others; each relies on the others; each needs the others to totally fulfill our mission. It is, indeed, a treat today to recognize and applaud that fact.

We are able to provide the Omtvedt Innovation Awards because of the generosity of Leone and the late Neal Harlan,

great friends of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and great friends of the university. The Harlans had the vision and foresight necessary to realize the importance of recognizing and supporting outstanding strengths and innovative work in the Institute. They honored Irv Omtvedt on his retirement as Vice President and Vice Chancellor with significant funding to support these Omtvedt Innovation Awards. The awards recognize areas of strength and promise within the Institute, as well as innovative research and programming by our faculty, our staff, and our students. We are so deeply appreciative of the Harlans' support for the Institute, and their belief in the work we all do here, and its importance.

We'll begin our recognition of the outstanding individuals receiving Omtvedt Innovation Awards today with an enthusiastic, innovative, successful Assistant Professor in the Department of Entomology. Dr. Tiffany Heng-Moss, would you come forward, please?

The extraordinary contributions Dr. Heng-Moss has made to IANR, the university, and our state so early in her career – she earned her bachelor of science in horticulture from UNL just nine years ago – have heightened interest in science and have brought science to new audiences in Nebraska and elsewhere.

Since joining the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources as a faculty member in 2001, she totally revamped our introductory entomology courses and sparked great student appreciation for insects. Enrollment in her classes increased almost 80 percent the first two years she taught! And to think, she was all set to focus solely on a career in research before she had the opportunity to teach one class, and found out she just loved it!

Dr. Heng-Moss, with some logistical assistance from her colleagues, in 2003 launched the department's first distance education course to students in eight high schools. Students earn UNL college credit taking her class, and students can earn high school credit for their work in the college class. Not only

does the Insect Biology for Concurrent Credit Program meet national and state high school science standards, the exposure these high school students have to CASNR and the university through Dr. Heng-Moss's innovative class offers real potential as an important recruitment vehicle for the CASNR.

Dr. Heng-Moss has helped drive a curriculum for a new insect science major to come in the fall of 2005, strengthening collaboration among academic departments and colleges, as well as recruiting students. In addition, she developed three courses to support the Department of Entomology's distance education master's program, and she teaches those courses each semester. This program delivered by her and her entomology department colleagues already has had 25 graduates and currently has 80 students in more than 20 states and five countries.

Dr. Heng-Moss's outreach efforts include a number of programs for K-12 students and their teachers statewide. These range from the popular Bug Bash to helping our students use insects to reach students with disabilities.

As a researcher, Dr. Heng-Moss investigates turf and crop resistance to insects; plant defenses against insects; and genetic responses of plants to sap-feeding insects.

We honor Dr. Heng-Moss with an Omtvedt Innovation Award today. It joins an already growing list of honors given her in 2003 and 2004. These include a Junior Faculty Holling Family Award for Teaching Excellence; recognition from the UNL Parents Association and UNL Teaching Council; and being listed in Who's Who Among America's Teachers.

Please help me acknowledge these fine accomplishments of Dr. Tiffany Heng-Moss.

(Applause)

Our second Omtvedt Innovation Award recipient today is Alice Henneman, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educator in Lancaster County. Ms. Henneman, would you come forward, please?

Alice Henneman is an Extension Educator of vision.

In 1996 she started her food nutrition and safety Web site and a Web newsletter then called Food Talk, now called Food Reflections, because she saw the Web as something that was going to grow.

And boy, was she ever right! She took this opportunity to reach a larger audience with less lead-time and to develop credibility as an expert source early; today her site draws approximately one million hits yearly. She says her work with the World Wide Web is like having a new ticket in the lottery every day – it's exciting! People discover her site, and the audience expands as they do. It allows her to leverage information, with the only limitation being her imagination.

Ms. Henneman has a wonderfully innovative imagination.

Tufts University reviews Web sites four times a year. Ms. Henneman's Food Web site is ranked "Among the Best" by Tufts' "Nutrition Navigator – A Rating Guide to Nutrition Web sites." In Tuft's "Food Safety" category her site holds a higher ranking than

the American Dietetic Association or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention!

Currently, her Food Reflections e-mail newsletter has nearly 10,000 subscribers, who include consumers, educators, and health professionals in 73 countries. Some of the comments she receives include:

*"*Congratulations from the Dominican Republic. This is a valuable tool for the safety of foods that sometimes many of us forget."*

*"*I always find "something" that will help me reach my clientele in an easy-to-understand way while staying with research-based info. Works for me too! Thanks for this great tool."*

Ms. Henneman also is known for her ability and willingness to "collaborate" with others to provide audiences with nutrition and food safety information. This year she received the Community Health Award from the Lincoln-Lancaster County Board of Health, with which she has worked more than a decade. She is

Cooperative Extension's 2004 Distinguished Extension Educator, and a member of a team that received the second-place national award this year for educational-technology from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. The team award is for a mini-lessons series entitled Small Victories that promotes positive food, physical activity, and body-image attitudes and behaviors. It was developed by University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service; Ms. Henneman was asked to become a team member because of her expertise apparent in materials she developed that the Wyoming team wished to use in their project.

Please join me in congratulating Alice Henneman, 2004 Omtvedt Innovation Award winner.

(Applause)

I'm delighted to present our third award to a very real strength of the Institute. Alan Moeller, would you come forward, please?

Alan Moeller is Assistant Vice Chancellor of the Institute. We honor him today for his innovative work as the driving force in establishing the Institute's business centers, the first ever established at the university.

We also honor him for his contributions to strengthening the Institute, and for being a skilled liaison who represents us so well with decision makers, constituents, and others as he educates all listeners about the importance of the Institute to Nebraska.

Long before the IANR business centers began in 1995, Mr. Moeller saw a need and sought a solution. He saw individuals in units "struggling" to fill a number of different hats in providing administrative-support to their departments. Many of those were hats they'd never been academically-prepared to wear. Mr. Moeller reasoned that if we could ask people to specialize in a specific aspect of administrative support, it would help both the employees and those faculty and staff members they support. Yet that couldn't occur without a "critical-mass" of resources to allow for specialization. Combining resources of individual

departments into business centers serving more than one department allows that critical mass to exist and provide more effective and efficient work. It lets us identify how we might best use each individual's talents, and allows individual employees to focus on and to further develop those talents, increasing performance and efficiency because of advantages in collaboration, scale, and teamwork. We see an increase in the overall level of business expertise and skill of team members while providing backup and oversight to provide better administrative support to unit administrators, faculty, and other staff. This allows administrators, faculty, and other staff to spend less time on routine business matters. We applaud Mr. Moeller's business center innovation that provides benefits to all of us all in the Institute.

We also applaud Mr. Moeller's dedication to the Institute and the University. He is an effective, skilled advocate for IANR, as well as for the importance of agriculture, natural resources, family, and community issues in Nebraska. We thank you, Alan,

for your unwavering belief in the importance of the work our faculty and staff do, which drives the expert-skills you employ on behalf of all of us as you work with the Legislature, the Congressional delegation, and with our constituent groups. You truly are a major strength of the Institute. We thank you for all the innovation you have spearheaded to make us more efficient and more effective. Please join me in congratulating Alan Moeller.

(Applause)

Our last – but in no ways our least! – award recipient today is the Institute's most recent member of the National Academy of Sciences, Dr. James Van Etten. Dr. Van Etten, would you come forward, please?

Dr. Van Etten has been involved in the discovery and initial characterization of the prototype member of two of the approximately 60 known families of viruses. The first is bacteriophage phi 6, and the second, PBCV-1 (*Paramecium*

*bursaria chlorella* virus). The discovery of these two viruses clearly increased the world-wide body of knowledge about the diversity of viruses. Studies on these viruses continue to produce unexpected rewards, including discoveries in biochemistry, in molecular biology, in evolution, and in ecology.

Here at the university, Dr. Van Etten is IANR's William Allington Distinguished Professor of Plant Pathology, and winner of the Outstanding Research and Creative Activity Award, the highest research-award given at Nebraska. In 2003, he was elected to the National Academy of Sciences. The Fourth Annual Symposium in Virology held in October here in Lincoln was a special tribute to him.

Besides being known as a brilliant scientist, Dr. Van Etten has several other titles also: Professor. Colleague. Mentor. Friend.

If you visit Dr. Van Etten's laboratory, you'll see lab coats of former students hanging there – coats that date back to 1969, and have certain characteristics about the students written

directly on them. When Jim Etten ran out of wall space on which to "retire" former students' lab coats, he began hanging their photographs, instead.

At any one time you'll find several undergrads, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, visiting scholars, and technicians working in Dr. Van Etten's laboratory. He includes undergrad students so they can be exposed to research and have a hands-on opportunity to learn. And learn they do.

Besides his work with colleagues here in Nebraska, Dr. Van Etten's discoveries have led to international research collaborations involving about 20 laboratories in the United States, Europe, and Japan.

We are tremendously proud of him, and also tremendously proud of the fact that all five Nebraska faculty members elected to the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the National Institute of Medicine have had their faculty appointments in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. What a wonderful demonstration of the talent and

dedication of our faculty and the strength of IANR programs! We celebrate each of these tremendous scientists, and today we honor Dr. Van Etten for his outstanding contributions to science, our state, and our world.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Van Etten.

(Applause)

As I mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, it is a real pleasure today to honor four such outstanding members of our Institute community, each working in diverse areas, for the betterment of the Institute, our state, and our world. Thank you, each of you, for all you do every day with excellence and grace. Let's give them one more round of applause to show our appreciation.