

June 2005

## The Leading Object: June 2005

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## Perspectives

Constituent support is important to us in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and throughout the entire University.

Sometimes that support comes through personal interactions. Sometimes it's people speaking on our behalf. Sometimes it's a gift entrusted to us.

Twice this month I've had the pleasant opportunity to celebrate such support. I've done so recalling the old adage that people of vision plant saplings under which they'll never sit so others one day might have shade. In the same way, it is people with vision who provide gifts to benefit future Nebraskans.

Friday, June 3, as we celebrated the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the research and education building at the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead, we were pleased to rename that building the August N. Christenson Research and Education Building.

In doing so, we honor Augie Christenson for his outstanding loyalty and commitment to the students, faculty, and programs of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

In August 2004, Mr. Christenson committed a substantial planned gift to the University of Nebraska Foundation to provide perpetual support for the College of Business Administration, the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the Agricultural Research and Development Center.

A 1945 graduate of UNL's College of Business Administration, Mr. Christenson grew up on his family's farm near Colon. As the plaque in his honor at ARDC notes, "He dedicated his career to the Standard Chemical Manufacturing Company, a livestock feed and supply firm in Omaha, and retired as the Senior Vice President and Treasurer."

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**John C. Owens**  
NU Vice President and  
Harlan Vice Chancellor, IANR

# The Leading Object

*The Morrill Act of 1862 established a Land Grant University in each state where The Leading Object would be instruction in agriculture and related fields.*

June 2005

## Nelson leaves whirlwind for slower pace

Darrell Nelson has kept a note card listing his daily schedule in his shirt pocket every work day for the last 21 years. That habit is about to end.

"On July 1<sup>st</sup>, I'm not going to have a card anymore, and I'm going to set my own schedule," said Nelson, who retires at the end of June as Dean and Director of IANR's Agricultural Research Division.

The absence of the card doesn't mean Nelson will lack for something to do. In fact he plans to remain at UNL as Dean Emeritus. There are some students he'd like to work with and some scientific writing he'd like to do.

But life will be slower than the whirlwind Nelson has been on since he joined UNL as Head of the Department of Agronomy in 1984 and ARD Dean in 1988. The research division has changed and grown greatly during Nelson's tenure, but he is quick to reject all the credit, commending "terrific faculty members who have done a great job in research and graduate education."

The year before Nelson became Dean, UNL's agricultural researchers received \$8 million in grants and contracts. That total grew to \$42 million in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004.

"We've been going up steadily every year," he said. "Our faculty have become a lot more competitive and interested in grants during the past 15 years."

Plenty of other changes have occurred during Nelson's tenure, he said. More basic science has been added to the work of researchers and interest in molecular biology and biotechnology has exploded, which he said were "almost non-existent when I came here."

The focus in the agricultural industry has changed, he said. Two decades



**Nelson**

ago more people were concerned about agricultural profitability, such as how to market commodities and find more uses for them.

"There's still some of that but the focus is on water science, how we preserve rural communities and the environment and natural resources," he said. "Those issues have really come up in terms of relative importance."

In addition, researchers today face more regulatory guidelines and laws relating to safety. While the laws are good, they add another bureaucratic layer to researchers' jobs, he said.

Nelson sees more changes in research ahead. The hot topics right now are functional genomics or the function of genes, and bioinformatics or the science of manipulating large amounts of data, he said.

Nebraska researchers are involved in these subjects and plenty of others. A recent study shows that of all the research cited in scientific journals, UNL's ARD

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He's a member of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Chancellor's Club with Distinction and the University of Nebraska President's Club. Since the 1950s, Mr. Christenson has supported the university he believes in through his gifts. The plaque notes, "The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is forever grateful to Augie Christenson and his vision for outstanding education, research, and outreach."

I echo that wholeheartedly. We are, indeed, forever grateful.

We are grateful for big gifts, and for those that are smaller. Gifts often fund student scholarships and organizations, help make undergraduate research possible, boost 4-H programs statewide, enhance research, strengthen faculty leadership development and professional development opportunities, and more. Much more. Gifts of all sizes help move us forward.

June 23, as we celebrated the new Barta Brothers Ranch Headquarters building

at the Barta Brothers Ranch near Rose, I marveled again at the wonderful gift Clifford and James Barta provided the Institute and Nebraska by working with the University of Nebraska Foundation to see that their ranch would benefit future generations of Nebraskans through our research and demonstration programs.

Excellent stewards of the land during their lives, Clifford and Jimmy planted thousands of trees, created ponds, and cared for wildlife, in addition to ranching. The ranch's unique blend of native grassland and tree plantings provides a remarkable habitat capable of supporting livestock production and a diverse wildlife population.

Today the Barta Brothers Ranch offers us tremendous opportunity to demonstrate the significant benefits of an integrated resource management program. It also, because of their vision and sense of history, is a place where future generations will be able to gain insight into the activities and methodologies which the

Barta brothers actually used in their daily ranching operation.

The Barta Brothers Ranch is another significant gift that will provide research and education for people who never knew the two brothers, but will certainly benefit from their vision.

Recently Ann Bruntz, former Nebraska Cattlemen's Research and Educational Foundation Board President who owns and operates a feedlot with her husband, became the University of Nebraska Foundation's Director of Development for IANR. Ann's understanding of agriculture and IANR, as well as her own vision, make her a good person to represent us with private donors. We look forward to Ann expanding the opportunities for charitable investments by our alumni and friends in order to keep IANR, its people, programs, and facilities competitive for our state.

## June proclaimed Dairy Month



*Governor Dave Heineman inspects ice cream shown to him by Dairy Plant Manager Nirav Pandya (left). Heineman visited the Dairy Store on East Campus to declare June Dairy Month. Also shown is Nebraska Agriculture Director Greg Ibach (right).*

Editor - Lori McGinnis • Layout - Anne Moore • Photography - Brett Hampton

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faculty had the 16<sup>th</sup> highest number of citations in the world. In addition, 46 percent of UNL research funding goes to ARD faculty.

"You've got to feel good about that," he said. "That's unheard of at most universities."

Nelson admits he enters a new stage in his life with mixed emotions.

"It's been a very good place to work, mainly because of the people you deal with," he said. "They're very motivated to work as hard as they can for the people of Nebraska."

- Lori McGinnis

### Need to meet with the Vice President/Vice Chancellor?

Drop-ins each Friday from 3-5 p.m.\*

NU Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources and Harlan Vice Chancellor of IANR

202 Ag Hall • (402) 472-2871

\*Occasionally Dr. Owens will be called away on University business.

## Raun's discovery benefits cattle industry

**A**rthur Raun is credited for discovering a cattle feed additive with such benefits that it is being used in more than 90 percent of feedlots in the nation.

Raun, a 1955 technical science and agriculture graduate at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, discovered the additive while working for Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis. His research led to the additive Rumensin, used since the mid-1970s.

"It's been a market leader ever since," Raun said.

In 2004, more than \$100 million worth of Rumensin was sold to feedlots in the



Raun

United States.

The additive improves efficiency of feed utilization and decreases cost of production.

"It changes rumination fermentation so cattle can use feed more efficiently," Raun said.

Raun's research contributed to his recognition about 15 years ago by Beef Magazine as one of the top 25 individuals making great contributions to the beef industry.

Raun grew up on a Minden area farm and was the youngest of four. His two brothers, Robert and Ned, and sister, Joan, are all UNL graduates and have made significant contributions in their own right to the agricultural industry and Nebraska.

Arthur Raun wanted to work for a feed company after his graduation from UNL. However, while studying livestock nutrition at Iowa State University, he changed his mind when "I realized other opportunities were available."

Those opportunities included doing research for three months for Pfizer, the world's largest pharmaceutical company. He then joined the Air Force and spent a year researching at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. He later taught physiology for three years at the Air Force Academy.

Then Raun joined Eli Lilly, where he remained for 31 years. Other notable achievements there included directing the efficacy research on the use of Tylosin, an antibiotic for controlling liver abscesses in feedlot cattle.

"It was really a good company to work for," Raun said of Eli Lilly. "They gave me the freedom to research what you thought was potentially productive. You could explore what you wanted to explore."

Raun retired in 1992 and moved to Elbert, Colorado, where he and his wife, Ruth, quite fittingly considering his career, raise cattle.

– Lori McGinnis

## Extension assists in Karzai visit

**U**niversity of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension played an important role when the President of Afghanistan visited rural Nebraska.

When it was announced that President Hamid Karzai wanted to visit the Harry Knobbe feedlot in Cuming County, Extension Educator Larry Howard in West Point helped set the wheels in motion.

Howard said he put in place the county's biosecurity plan at the feedlot to ensure strict security measures were followed. Cuming County is Nebraska's leading beef-feedlot county and one of the top beef producing counties in the United States.

"It sent the message that we're vigilant on animal health," Howard said.

The visit to the farm was part of a May 25 visit by Karzai to Nebraska. While at the farm, Karzai toured the countryside,



Larry Howard, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Educator based in West Point, greets Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai at a West Point feedlot.

rode a horse, and gave a speech. Howard spoke with Karzai for several minutes and a local group gave him a pair of cowboy boots. Karzai reported the West Point visit was a highlight of his trip.

"It's something I won't soon forget," Howard said.

## Lauritzen Gardens new NSA affiliate

**N**ebraska's Statewide Arboretum has a new affiliate site – Lauritzen Gardens, Omaha's Botanical Center.

Jim Locklear, NSA Director, said he envisions many exciting collaborations between the NSA and Lauritzen.

"Lauritzen Gardens is an inspiring horticultural resource for all of Nebraska," he said.

The 100-acre Lauritzen Gardens has numerous theme gardens, including an herb garden, a rose garden, a Victorian garden, shade gardens, and a children's garden, as well as an arboretum, a woodland trail, and bird sanctuary. In addition, development has begun on a Japanese garden.

"The partnership of NSA and Lauritzen Gardens should greatly benefit the public outreach efforts of both institutions," Locklear said.

The NSA has about 80 affiliate sites across the state, including arboretums, botanical gardens, historic sites, and high-quality landscapes.

## Vidaver named to national biosecurity board

Anne Vidaver clearly sees the challenge ahead of her. Helping protect the United States from biological attack is a big job, after all.



Vidaver

Vidaver, Head of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Department of Plant Pathology, has been selected to serve on the

National Science Advisory Board for Biosecurity of the National Institutes of Health.

The board's task is to advise the federal government and agencies that conduct or support life sciences research that could be misused and pose a biological threat to public health or national security. Vidaver was nominated by U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Michael Leavitt.

"It's a mixed feeling," Vidaver said about her appointment. "It's both a compliment and a concern."

The concern is over the challenge of the

huge task ahead, she said. Vidaver will be the only representative on the 25-member board who specializes in plant health.

"Since I've been in the field over 30 years, I have a general knowledge in a wide area," she said.

Vidaver has been on the UNL faculty for 35 years, 21 of them leading Plant Pathology.

John Owens, University of Nebraska Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, praised Vidaver's appointment.

"Professor Vidaver is a first-rate scientist and, considering UNL's 16<sup>th</sup> ranking in the world in agricultural science citations, Secretary Leavitt clearly looked to a top tier university for this key appointment," Owens said.

The board, created last year, will help develop guidelines for identifying and conducting research that may require special attention and security surveillance; codes of conduct for scientists and laboratory workers for use by organizations doing life science research; and resources to educate the research community about biosecurity.

The board's first meeting is scheduled this summer in Bethesda, Maryland.

## Lagrimini new Department Head

L. Mark Lagrimini, a biotechnology researcher, has been named Head of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln's Department of Agronomy and Horticulture.



Lagrimini

Lagrimini succeeds Lowell Moser, who served as

Interim Head after Kenneth Cassman returned to the faculty last year. Lagrimini will start August 1.

Lagrimini most recently served as Project Leader at Athenix Corp., an agricultural biotechnology firm. From 1999–2004, he was a Project Leader at Syngenta Biotechnology Inc. in North Carolina. He was a faculty member in the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science at Ohio State University from 1987–1999.

He was active in efforts to promote the need for biotechnology research to the Ohio Legislature and served on the OSU Plant Molecular Biology/Biotechnology Advisory Committee.

## ARDC Building named after August Christenson

The University of Nebraska's research and education building at the Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead has a new name.

The building was named in honor of August "Augie" Christenson of Omaha, a longtime supporter of the university.

The August N. Christenson Research and Education Building serves as a hub for interaction with crop and livestock producers as well as urban and rural audiences. The renaming was announced June 3 to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the facility.

Christenson, a 1945 graduate of the university, has given annually for nearly 50

years. He recently committed a planned gift to the University of Nebraska Foundation to provide endowed program, scholarship, and research support for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the College of Business Administration.

Regent Chair Howard Hawks said Christenson's gift will continue giving through the years.

"Research and extension education programs here, at the Agricultural Research and Development Center and throughout the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, may spark discov-

eries of which we now can only dream," Hawks said. "It may provide the spark for future leaders, scientists, business people, and others."

Christenson said his family's background in agriculture is an important reason for his giving.

"From the days of my grandfather's farm and my father's struggle with the farm during the Depression to my own career with livestock, my life has relied on agriculture," he said. "For that reason, I believe it is worth supporting and that it is important to ensure it continues here in Nebraska."