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2006

2006 East Campus Arbor Day Celebration

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Owens, John, "2006 East Campus Arbor Day Celebration" (2006). *John Owens: Speeches & Appearances*. 133.

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2006 East Campus Arbor Day Celebration
10 a.m. Monday, April 24, 2006
John C. Owens, NU Vice President and Harlan Vice Chancellor,
IANR

It cannot be lost on those of us present here today that Nebraska, the land of tall-skies and wide-prairies, where early settlers saw grass roll to the horizon broken only by the call of the lark, is the home of Arbor Day. Nebraska is, indeed, the tree-planter state.

Early Nebraska settlers missed the beauty and shade of the trees they'd left behind. They missed windbreaks to help hold soil in place, as well as the fuel and building materials trees offer us all.

When J. Sterling Morton arrived in ^{the} Nebraska territory in 1854 he missed the trees of his Detroit home. As editor of Nebraska's first newspaper, he used that newspaper to spread agricultural information and his enthusiasm for trees to a highly receptive audience.

In January 1872 at a meeting of the State Board of Agriculture, Morton proposed a tree-planting holiday to be called Arbor Day. They liked his idea and set the date for April 10 of that year, offering prizes to counties and people who properly planted the most trees that day. It's estimated more than one million trees were planted.

One million trees. In one day.

Nebraska has a wonderful heritage of hard-working dreamers!

Today we commemorate Arbor Day the last Friday of every April.

"Other holidays repose on the past," J. Sterling Morton once said. "Arbor Day proposes the future."

We all can be so very proud of the way Nebraskans go right on proposing the future, maintaining Morton's vision by accomplishing such things as our university and ^{the} statewide arboretum program, and the Active Tree City USA program that places Nebraska in the top 10 nationally with the number of Tree Cities in a state.

We view Nebraskans' enthusiasm for trees in many ways. We see it here with work and efforts conducted through the university in examples such as the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, the Nebraska Forest Service, green industry partners, and organizations such as the Nebraska Community Forestry Council, the Nebraska Arborists Association, and the Nebraska Nursery and Landscape Association. I'm told that collectively these organizations touch the lives of more than 90 percent of those of us who are privileged to call Nebraska home.

What a great pleasure it is to be here today, celebrating Nebraska's continuing commitment to our future, a future that clearly includes trees. Thank you.

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