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Owens, John, "Omtvedt Innovation Award Presented to Marilyn Fox" (2006). *John Owens: Speeches & Appearances*. 199.

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Omtvedt Innovation Award
Presented to Marilyn Fox
NU Vice President/IANR Vice Chancellor's Council
August 21, 2006

It is such a pleasure to honor innovation and strength in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources today through this 2006 Omtvedt Innovation Award. This award is made possible because of the generosity of Leone and the late Neal Harlan, great - friends of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The Harlans had the vision and the foresight to realize the importance of recognizing and supporting outstanding and innovative work in the Institute, and honored Irv Omtvedt on his retirement as Vice Chancellor of the Institute with a generous gift of funds to support the Omtvedt Innovation Awards. These awards recognize areas of strength and promise within the Institute, as well as innovative research and programming by our faculty, staff, and students.

Today's 2006 Omtvedt Innovation Award recipient truly has made and continues to make a difference in people's lives through many

types of "innovative" collaborations and extension-education programming.

Marilyn Fox, will you come forward, please?

By the way, today starts Marilyn's 28th year with University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension! Marilyn's "education emphasis" has long focused on "improving" quality-of-life for families, for communities, and for our state. Through collaborations and funding efforts with multiple agencies and organizations, her leadership, her creativity, and her hard work have positively-influenced hundreds-and-hundreds of lives in Nebraska.

Marilyn's dedication to helping families is shown through "teaching" nutrition and life skills to people who work with clients, many of whom ~~who~~ simply have not benefitted from positive role models in their lives. Prior to accepting her current role as program coordinator for Building Nebraska Families, Marilyn taught food

safety as an Educator in Hall and Adams counties to restaurant managers , to the public, and to other food-service workers. With recommendations and assistance from others, Marilyn launched a program teaching family management and life skills for people struggling to transition from welfare to work. Building Nebraska Families is a collaborative educational program between the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension and the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. Now established in nearly 60 counties in our state, Building Nebraska Families has served nearly 1,000 families and has had more than 200 graduates -- an exceptional rate of return for this type of educational program. Many participants now are able to practice new skills of coping with day-to-day stresses and many also have increased their personal incomes.

In fact, the impact of Building Nebraska Families has been cited by Mathematica Policy Research Inc., as a good example, with the suggestion that Building Nebraska Families can be a model for other states to follow.

Marilyn's work to assist others in understanding poverty has helped teachers and other professionals better-understand the issues faced by children living in poverty, including why children sometimes do not attend school. Through her efforts and her compassion, these professionals ^{now} practice more patience when working with people in poverty and may also have become involved with hunger projects, as well as food donations.

Beginning in 2004, Marilyn, together with colleague Sue Brown, focused on another quality-of-life area -- that of educating people about the dangers of methamphetamine. Some say this illegal drug has reached epidemic levels and some say this is Nebraska's greatest social challenge. Rural Nebraska is ^{especially} vulnerable because many meth ingredients, such as anhydrous ammonia, are readily available near our agricultural enterprises. Her efforts in 2005 helped teach more than 5,000 Nebraskans about the dangers of meth and, more than that, helped drive it out of a community! Take the case of the town of Indianola, population 642, in southwest Nebraska. Six months

"after" a meth awareness program was "taught" there, the sheriff reported a significant decrease in meth activity attributed "in part" to increased citizen reporting and increased community cohesiveness. This educational program on methamphetamine will receive the top national program award for the year from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Science. Marilyn, Sue Brown, and a representative from the Nebraska State Patrol will accept this award in October in Denver.

I am very pleased to add the Omtvedt Innovation Award to Marilyn's many state and national awards. Congratulations, Marilyn!