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Omtvedt Innovation Award
Presented to Allen G. Blezek
NU Vice President/IANR Vice Chancellor's Council
August 20, 2007

It is such a pleasure to honor innovation and accomplishment in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources today through this 2007 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. They 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 2007 Omtvedt Innovation Award recipient [REDACTED] has made a difference in people's lives, and in the leadership and betterment of Nebraska.

Professor Allen Blezek, will you come forward, please?

Allen is widely recognized as an educator, innovator, and leader

throughout Nebraska, as well as nationally and internationally. For more than 40 years, his career has focused on agricultural leadership development for both youth and adults. Often referred to by his peers as the "Dean of Agricultural Leadership Development Programs," Allen has directed the Nebraska LEAD Program for nearly 25 years.

LEAD -- Leadership Education/Action Development -- is Nebraska's only comprehensive statewide agricultural leadership development program. LEAD provides Nebraskans ^{who have} ~~with~~ strong agricultural interests an opportunity to participate in an intensive -- and rewarding -- two-year educational program; a program that deals with ~~learning opportunities~~ learning opportunities for heightened global understanding ^{Leading to} more effective agricultural leadership and perspective. The varied social, political, and economic conditions that exist in our own country become much more familiar to participants as they meet government, industry, and national organization leaders in the United States.

Under Allen's ~~effective~~ leadership, more than 750 of Nebraska's most promising men and women have enhanced their leadership abilities, absolutely essential for the long-term future of farming, ranching, agribusiness, Nebraska, and the nation, especially as we move forward in the 21st Century. Allen has led numerous delegations and

conducted or participated in international programs in "nearly 100" of the world's countries, "some" of them multiple times.

In addition to holding the rank of professor in UNL's Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication, Allen has served as Department Head, and as President of the UNL Faculty Senate. He was "founding Director" of the UNL Center for Leadership Development and has served on a "lengthy-list" of committees throughout the university, as well as in "various" professional organizations at the local, state, national, and international levels. His fund-raising and public relations abilities for "multiple causes" are well-known. ~~_____~~

In fact, one of Allen's fund-raising efforts "now" bears his name. As a member of the Nebraska Vocational Agriculture Foundation Board, Allen was the driving force in bringing financial stability and adding facilities to the foundation's Leadership Center at "Aurora". The Allen G. Blezek Hall was "dedicated" at the center in 1990 in recognition of his work.

As many of us know, Allen has announced his plans to retire Sept. 1. He describes the LEAD program as being on "an all-time high with respect to the large number of applicants, a solid financial base, a

number of endowments in place or in the process of being finalized, "highly-recognized" efforts in public relations, and rave program reviews at all levels."

In addition to the many awards he has earned, one award has been "named" for him. The Allen G. Blezek Friend of LEAD Award was first given in 1999. It is to be presented "annually" by the Nebraska LEAD Alumni Association to an individual and/or organization who demonstrated a "distinguished history" of providing outstanding support to the Nebraska LEAD program.

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

IRV OMTVEDT

LEE HARLAN -

Judge Harry SPENCER