

Sept. 16, 2015

### **2015 Rural Futures Conference Oct. 21-22 at NCTA**

Curtis, Neb. - "Hope Inspires Vision" is the theme of the third national Rural Futures Conference, scheduled for Oct. 21-23 in two Nebraska locations, including the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

Registration for the conference, which drew a sold-out crowd of more than 500 when it was last held in 2013, is currently open at <http://rfc.nebraska.edu>. The conference is hosted by the [Rural Futures Institute](#) at the University of Nebraska.

Attendees from the Curtis area will be able to participate in this year's conference at NCTA on Oct. 21 and 22. Registration is \$100 for the Curtis location (\$20 for high school and college students). The conference also will be offered at Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln.

"The Rural Futures Institute has been known for its ingenuity since its start, and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is pleased to be a partner in taking that innovation one step further by hosting the conference simultaneously here in Curtis," said Ron Rosati, NCTA dean.

"Entrepreneurs, business leaders, agricultural producers and students from high schools and colleges throughout the region will be joining us at NCTA to share in this live, rural perspective close to where we work and live," Rosati said.

Conference sessions will encourage attendees to work together to build hope and develop a vision for invigorating rural communities, he added.

The conference kicks off on the evening of Oct. 21 with a dialogue session between Howard G. Buffett and Howard W. Buffett, authors of *40 Chances: Finding Hope in a Hungry World*, a book about the limited opportunities people have to make a difference in the world.

Ronnie Green, NU vice president of agriculture and natural resources and senior vice chancellor for academic affairs and Harlan Vice Chancellor of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources, will moderate the dialog.

The Buffetts' session, "Finding Hope: Pioneering Your 40 Chances," is free and open to the public and is jointly sponsored with the Heuermann Lectures at IANR. NCTA participants are invited for pre-session refreshments at 4:45 p.m. at NCTA's Nebraska Agriculture Industry Education Center.

Other conference speakers include [Clifton Taulbert](#), a noted author, entrepreneur and businessman who is president and CEO of the Freemount Corp., a human capital development company; and [Shane Lopez](#), author

of *Making Hope Happen* and a leading Gallup researcher on the science of hope. University of Nebraska President Hank Bounds will make opening remarks, “Dream Big With Me,” on the morning of Oct. 22.

“We know that hope matters tremendously to the success of rural communities,” said Chuck Schroeder, founding executive director of the Rural Futures Institute. “Active hope, combined with a strong vision for the future, can energize rural people and places and ensure that rural communities are a viable choice for young people to live and work.”

Speakers involved at the Curtis site are Anne Burkholder, Will Feed, Inc., Cozad; Ben Blecha, Ace Ortho Solutions, Benkelman; Ken Rahjes, AgView, Elwood; Sarah Pinet, Victory Hill Farm, Scottsbluff; and Barry Fox, Kinkaider Brewing Company, Broken Bow. Educators from four NCTA partner high schools will be bringing students and participating as well on Oct 22. They are from Cambridge, Cozad, Elm Creek and York.

“Our first two conferences in 2012 and 2013 confirmed our thinking that the long-term economic success of rural communities is a critical area for research and engagement – one in which the University of Nebraska is well-positioned to play a leadership role,” Schroeder adds. “We’re excited to again bring together stakeholders from Nebraska and beyond to share our best ideas.”

Other conference sessions will focus on entrepreneurship, broadband development, civic engagement, transdisciplinary education, eco-education, innovation and youth leadership. Faculty and students also will have the opportunity to present posters on research questions that showcase new knowledge and ideas relevant to the conference theme.

“The access for rural residents through the latest in communication technologies is vital for this conference,” Rosati adds. “We hope many will take advantage of this great opportunity here in Curtis.”

Activities at Lincoln include the first-ever Rural Opportunities Fair on Oct. 21, an event similar to a career fair in which students will have a chance to explore opportunities to live and work in rural communities across Nebraska and the region. Conference activities on Oct. 23 in Lincoln include remarks from Gov. Pete Ricketts, breakout sessions, a panel discussion and closing remarks from Schroeder.

Complete conference details with a full agenda, registration information, speaker biographies, poster session guidelines and more, are available at <http://rfc.nebraska.edu>.

Up-to-date information can also be found by following the Rural Futures Institute on Twitter and Facebook and by using #RFC2015 on social media.

#### ***About the Rural Futures Institute at the University of Nebraska***

The Rural Futures Institute (RFI) is one of four interdisciplinary institutes at the University of Nebraska that leverages talents and research-based expertise from across the university’s campuses. The RFI, through a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, encourages bold and futuristic approaches to collaboratively address state, national and global challenges.

*Editor's note: Members of the media are welcome to attend any part of the Rural Futures Conference at no charge. Contact Kayla or Mary for details about the Lincoln or Curtis locations, respectively.*

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