



## NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Rural Fellow has Memorable Experiences at NCTA Curtis**

By Andela Taylor/NCTA news

**Curtis, [July 14, 2023]** - Maryam Sule, a Rural Fellow from Bellevue, Nebraska, has experienced small-town summer living at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA) in Curtis, Nebraska. Maryam will be a sophomore chemical engineering student at UNL in the fall.

Part of the Rural Prosperity Nebraska outreach programs since 2013, the Rural Fellowships connect college students with rural Nebraska communities as part of a collaborative service-learning experience.

Maryam began the summer researching new ways to increase alumni engagement at NCTA. The significance of alumni connections came to light for her while spending time in the library's alumni room exploring the history from its inception in 1913 as the Nebraska School of Agriculture.

Next came the June gathering known as "Aggie" Alumni Day, where she met every generation of alum. The team explored several ideas and action plans to improve the alumni database and create new ways for former students to reconnect with their classmates and the college. Maryam then embarked upon a plan to create a trivia campaign on social media. It is evident through enthusiastic participation that this initiative will be an easily sustained activity for the future.

Maryam and the team (including grounds supervisor Tzi Martinez, intern Olivia Taylor, a senior civil engineering student at UNL, and the dean's and recruiting office) then researched and planned the development of a new NCTA Arboretum Walking Tour of campus. As an affiliated site of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum since 1985, campus leaders recognized the opportunity to increase campus visitation and maximize its educational impact by building upon this designation.

This ambitious project mapped and identified the trees and trails on campus to create a walking tour. The project primarily aims to showcase the diverse array of trees on campus and general information about the college, along with some history and trivia.

It will enhance the visitor experience with a voice-narrated audio tour they can access online or a printed brochure available at local attractions or a campus kiosk. These interactive guides appeal to broad audiences, from school group tours to garden clubs, history buffs, and individuals.

Transformative experiences have marked Maryam's time in Curtis. She has embraced the agricultural heritage of rural Nebraska, participating in time-honored practices such as branding cattle and horseback riding at the picturesque Leu Ranch. These encounters have deepened her understanding of the agricultural industry and its essential role in Nebraska's economy.

The warmth and hospitality of the Curtis community have left a lasting impact on Maryam. She vividly recalls attending a Fourth of July breakfast at the local golf course, where she was captivated by the natural beauty and laid-back atmosphere. Maryam expresses her deep appreciation for the hardworking students she met at NCTA, particularly members of the ranch crew, who inspired her with their dedication and passion for their work.

Project supervisor and associate dean Dr. Jennifer McConville shared, "Working with the Fellows this summer has been an amazing experience. For NCTA, we set a few lofty goals and have accomplished beneficial projects, including alumni relations and a walking tour for everyone to enjoy and learn something new about trees and our college!"

NCTA invites the public to the Rural Fellow Presentation on Thursday, July 20, at 7:00 p.m. The event will begin at the Education Center auditorium on the NCTA campus in Curtis. Attendees will have the opportunity to learn about Maryam's projects firsthand and explore the self-guided Arboretum Walking Tour.

As Maryam's journey as a Rural Fellow comes to a close, she expresses her heartfelt gratitude to the Rural Prosperity Nebraska program for providing her with this life-changing experience. She also acknowledges the support of her campus support team, the alumni, and the people of Curtis, who have made her time in rural Nebraska truly unforgettable.

For more information about the Rural Fellow Presentation or to arrange a summer tour at NCTA, please contact 1-800-3-CURTIS or visit the website at [ncta.unl.edu](http://ncta.unl.edu).

*Part of the University of Nebraska system, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is a two-year institution with a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology, and related industries. NCTA is known for its affordable tuition, high job-placement rate for its graduates, and student teams' success in competitive activities, including crops judging, ranch horse events, livestock judging, shotgun sports, stock dog trials, and intercollegiate rodeo. The college is consistently ranked as one of the best two-year schools in the nation.*

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