



## NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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NCTA Appreciates State FFA

By Dan Stehlik, Faculty Ag Mechanics

Over 7,000 blue jackets flooded Lincoln last week for the 95<sup>th</sup> Nebraska FFA State Convention. The theme, "It's Up to Us!" was appropriate as every contributor to Nebraska agriculture was engaged and striving for the excellence needed to build our agricultural workforce. I congratulate all who were honored and achieved their goals and, in many cases, scholarships!

For us at NCTA, the event culminated in hosting many District LDE and CDE events throughout the year. I have enjoyed working with students for 29 years, first as a high school teacher and FFA advisor and now through my involvement at NCTA.

For the past eight years, I have been involved in creating the State Ag Tech/Mech event. It consists of six individual components: an electrical exam and wiring test, an operator's manual test, an equipment observation test, a small gas engine or hydraulic/pneumatic test, and parts identification. Each school also completes a team activity. This year's problem encountered a maple syrup processing system.

First, I want to compliment all the contestants! They were on time, ready to go, prepared, and cooperative! The day was fun.

Good job to the instructors/advisors for getting them to that point! Besides the competitive cooperation, I have truly witnessed the development of technical and mechanical knowledge and skills by the students involved. That should include all FFA members, even those not qualifying for this opportunity. Again, a credit to the instructors/advisors as we prepare students for their place in the Nebraska fields of agriculture!

As co-superintendent, Dr. Doug Smith really complements efforts toward the other half of the event with his experience using scantron forms, delegating workers, dividing school teams into rotations, and so many other details to make this event run smoothly.

I am very grateful for the dozen NCTA students who assisted with registration, monitoring, testing, scoring, setting up, and cleaning up. Their involvement was an eye-opener for some regarding an FFA event. They also assisted the recruiters at the Expo as time permitted.

Also, I appreciate the NCTA administration and faculty permitting NCTA students, Dr. Smith and I, to miss classes and devote effort and time readying for this activity. I hope student competitors will check out our programs at NCTA to add to the skills and knowledge they started to develop as they prepared for this FFA event and have studied in their high school Ag Mechanics courses.

Thanks to Matt Kreifels, Seth Wert, Jennifer Greenlee, and many other IANR ALEC personnel for their work in the background to facilitate any needs we may encounter setting up for the CDE. The Pinnacle Bank Arena staff also deserves appreciation for the facility preparation, and as Nebraskans, we should be proud of supporting an event center of this caliber in our Capital City.

With this year's theme of Ag Processing Systems, finding equipment 250 miles from Curtis that is not currently used and can be transported to PBA was difficult. I appreciated Valhalla Bee Farm in Lincoln for allowing us to use their honey extractor free of charge for the Equipment Analysis component of the CDE.

Finally, I am thankful for the challenge to prepare for and write the tests for this annual competition. Considerable time reading and researching the theme each year is necessary, and I gain much knowledge and understanding of the various ag systems. I enjoy engaging with the instructors/advisors across the state in this process.

It is rewarding to be a part of Nebraska FFA as it empowers students to learn critical skills, become leaders, explore career paths, and understand its essential role in the success of agriculture.

NCTA Events:

- Apr. 5: Nebraska Cattlemen visit NCTA
- Apr. 6-9: Punchy in Pink Spring Round Up, McCook
- Apr. 11: Discovery Days Tour at NCTA
- Apr. 18: New Student Enrollment
- Apr. 17: Recruit at South Dakota FFA
- Apr. 20: Recruit at Wyoming FFA

*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 the success of student teams 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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