



## NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

**NCTA NEWS**  
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NCTA Dean's Column by Ron Rosati, Ph.D.

### Aggie roundup at NCTA

Like a rodeo, roping or Sandhills branding, an annual gathering of NCTA alumni can draw a crowd.

It's a fun social event held each June for friends and graduates of not only the ag college, but for alumni and families of the region's residential high school which first opened its doors to 82 students on September 9, 1913.

Last weekend was a special time for memories and celebrations of the "Curtis Aggies" – now officially known as the Nebraska Aggie Alumni Association.

With nearly 85 alumni and friends gathered in Curtis, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture and the alumni board members hosted a festive time for visitors returning to their alma mater.

NCTA is a picturesque, rural institution in Southwest Nebraska, with a campus population smaller than most graduating classes of Nebraska's larger high schools.

As part of the bigger land-grant institution of the University of Nebraska, NCTA has a statewide mission with about 4,400 living alumni.

We are proud to be affiliated with the Aggie Alumni Association and our college graduates who include producers, agribusiness owners and managers, animal health professionals, and industry leaders such as:

- Joan Ruskamp of Dodge, Nebraska, chair of the Cattleman's Beef Promotion and Research Board;
- Steve Wellman of Syracuse, Nebraska, director of Nebraska's Department of Agriculture; and
- Eva Oliver of Merriman, Nebraska, a 2018 graduate honors in veterinary technology who, in January, will become 2019 Miss Rodeo Nebraska.

Our graduates live and work throughout the state, and nation. Some alumni who attended the weekend reunion live nearby. Many drove longer distances to get to Curtis.

One trio "car pooled" from Burwell. A couple traveled five hours from northeastern Nebraska. A father and 10-year-old son drove for the day from Platte County.

Rahn and Peggy Bek are Nebraska natives who returned from Texas to visit family, friends and former classmates. It's always a pleasure to see them at the reunion.

Two friends from the Class of '76 made the trek from eastern Nebraska. Now, 42 years after graduating as Aggie veterinary technicians, each is still immersed in a profession of caring for companion animals, livestock and pets.

Their return to Curtis was the first in three decades. They laughed at tales of college memories, soaked up local scenery, explored campus. And, connected with news friends at Saturday's banquet.

Thank you, Peggy and Patty, and all who returned to Curtis for a great weekend. We appreciate your support of your alma mater and our next generations of agricultural and veterinary technology graduates.

The alumni learned the details about NCTA's growing enrollment, its recent national recognition for the success of its graduates, and our new academic majors. They applauded the success of their colleagues and they thanked friends of the college. We appreciate them taking the time to come back to campus to fill everyone in on our recent activities.

This year, the alumni again presented scholarships to three Aggie students. KayLee Rasmussen of Burwell, Cole Sundquist of Ainsworth, and Shayla Woracek of Maxwell will begin second-year studies in August.

Alumni also celebrated honorees at Saturday's awards banquet led by Aggie Alumni president Dave Mehaffey, '83 ag mechanics graduate.

Award recipients included Reinke Manufacturing Co., Inc., of Deshler for Alumni Service; Boni Perks Edwards of North Platte for Alumni Achievement, and Conrad Nelson of Wallace for Legacy/Distinguished Service.

Bill and Judy Nutt of Curtis were honored last year as the 2017 Honorary Life Members and this year with a gift to the Legacy Wall display in the NCTA Nebraska Agriculture Industry Education Center.

University of Nebraska Vice President Mike Boehm was named the association's 2018 Honorary Life Member.

David and Ann Ramm Bruntz, Class of '71 alumni from Friend, Nebraska, presented the 2017-2018 Bruntz Family Teaching Award to NCTA Animal Science Professor Joanna Hergenreder.

Brandon Benitz, KRVN radio announcer, emceed a lively and entertaining program and moderated an informative "Campus Conversation" with Jennifer McConville, associate dean, and yours truly. Our alumni are engaged in the college and we certainly appreciate their commitment to our future.

Plans are underway now for the 2019 Aggie Alumni Association meeting, on June 22, in Broken Bow. I will keep you posted on updates!



*NCTA Animal Science Professor and Ranch Horse Team Coach Joanna Hergenreder (right) receives the 2017-2018 Bruntz Family Teaching Award from David and Ann Ramm Bruntz, Class of '71. (NCTA News photo)*

*Alumni and former staff of Curtis' first college, University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture (UNSTA), enjoyed reminiscing at Saturday's banquet. Far right is longtime farm manager Andi Knepp, now retired at North Platte.*



*Aggie alumni heard about NCTA's national, award winning programs from Dean Ron Rosati (seated left) and Associate Dean Jennifer McConville (seated right) during the Saturday alumni banquet. The "Campus Conversation" was moderated by Emcee Brandon Benitz of KRVN Radio.*

*Aggie Alumni Past-President Kim Bowers Mortensen of Curtis, left, presents the 2018 Alumni Achievement award to Boni Perks Edwards, an alumna of the UNSTA Soil and Water program. Edwards is the Lincoln County Surveyor and lives in North Platte.*





*Conrad Nelson, agriculture producer from Wallace, received the 2018 Aggie Alumni Association's Legacy/Distinguished Alumni award, presented by Alumni Vice President Ann Ramm Bruntz. Nelson, Class of '78 Production Agriculture major, has been instrumental in helping with irrigation resources at the college farm and being an agronomy department advisor.*

*Rhonda Nutt Jochim of Bryon says college students and their horses, dogs and other animals have always been right at home at the farm near campus where her parents, Bill and Judy Nutt of Curtis, have provided boarding facilities since 1971.*

*Last year, the Nutts were named 2017 Honorary Life Members, and on Saturday, were honored by alumni, family, and friends with plaque for the NCTA Agriculture Industry Ed Center Legacy Wall.*



*Aggie Alumni Awards Chair and NCTA Irrigation Technician instructor Dan Stehlik presents the Alumni Service Award to Sandi Reinke Wendell of Axtell Nebraska, representing Reinke Manufacturing Co., Inc., of Deshler.*



*Cole Sundquist of Ainsworth received a second-year student scholarship for the 2018-2019 academic year. Dave Mehaffey, alumni president, presented the award.*

*Cole, a third generation attendee of the college, also served as the auctioneer for the 2018 alumni auction. Proceeds of silent and live auctions go toward student scholarships.*

*KayLee Rasmussen, daughter of NCTA alumni Scott and Carrie Rasmussen of Burwell, received an Aggie Alumni scholarship from President Dave Mehaffey. She is a second-year student studying animal management.*



*Three student scholarships for \$400 each were announced by Aggie Alumni Secretary Catherine Potter Hauptman and presented by President Dave Mehaffey.*



*Shayla Woracek of Maxwell, a second-year student in livestock industry management, was unable to attend.*

**The Aggies** will meet again June 22, 2019 at the One Box Convention Center in Broken Bow, Nebraska.

See this article online at: <https://go.unl.edu/5xok>

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**NCTA Mission:** The Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is devoted to a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology, food and related industries. The college provides open access to innovative technical education resulting in associate degrees, certificates, diplomas and other credentials.