



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Oct. 24, 2022

Aggies head to 95th National FFA Convention and Expo

By NCTA Dean Larry Gossen, Ph.D.

This last week in October has always been one of my favorite weeks of the year. While I love the cool weather and fall colors that are always peaking around this time of year, that's not what I find so special. This is National FFA Convention week.

As a lifelong FFA member, Agriculture Educator, State FFA Advisor, and National FFA employee before coming to the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture at Curtis, I had attended the national convention every year of my working career.

There is nothing like it. With 65,000 of your closest friends all converging onto the streets of Indianapolis, Indiana, the excitement and energy are contagious.

The convention always holds a special place in my heart because of the life-changing experiences provided for students. I still get goosebumps and chills when I hear the convention hall come alive during the opening ceremony held each session. The president asks "FFA members, why are we here?"

In unison, the arena hall explodes with the answer: "To practice brotherhood, honor agricultural opportunities and responsibilities, and develop those qualities of leadership which an FFA member should possess".

Then to close the session, the patriotism of this group of future agriculturalists is evident as the members place their hands over their hearts and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

Besides competitions and sessions, FFA members can participate in leadership workshops, tour businesses and sites in the Indianapolis area, and visit more than 300 exhibitors in the FFA Career Expo. Exhibitors represent agriculture, colleges, fundraising, the U.S. Armed Services and auto and truck manufacturers.

NCTA at Booth #2604

This year, Rulon Taylor, recruiter, and Aggie students Haley Robb and Colby Heinz are representing NCTA in the Expo's Collegiate Connection. Haley is an agriculture education major and Colby is studying agronomy industry management.

Over the course of three days, well over 60,000 FFA members, advisors and guests will make their way through the Indiana Convention Center and past NCTA at booth #2604. That's a lot of great exposure to attendees from all 50 states.

This fall at Curtis, NCTA has students enrolled from 19 different states. Of the Nebraskans, they are from 107 different communities and 65 counties. A large percentage of Aggie students were FFA members in high school. I am always excited to see them in their FFA t-shirts and caps as they walk around campus.

FFA members are known for their work ethic, character, leadership, and service. Those are great traits that we are also looking for in our students here. That is one reason FFA members fit the NCTA climate so well.

Each year, I host a reception for our Aggie students who will be recognized with the American FFA Degree, the highest degree an FFA member can achieve. This year, we have six students who earned their degree as members of their home chapters:

- Aleena Wagner, Bridgeport, Neb.
- Caitlin Smee, Ness City, Kansas
- Ellie Welke, Ainsworth, Neb.
- Gwen Olberding, Falls City, Neb.
- Luke Larson, Healdsburg, California
- Taylor Lautenschlager, Doniphan-Trumbull, Neb.

When I asked our students what they enjoyed most about their years attending convention, their replies were no surprise. Gwen said it was the networking and meeting members from across the country.

Aleena and Caitlin both agreed that the career expo was their favorite and the “three bags of freebies” that they walked out with.

There are several FFA chapters in southwest Nebraska and across the state that are competing in various competitive events this week. We wish them all the very best.

Aggie Animal Science and Agricultural Education Professor Doug Smith is also at Indianapolis as a committee member of the National FFA Livestock Judging Career Development Event. We are honored to have Dr. Smith serve the national organization in this capacity.

If you’ve read this far and are still with me, I will close this column recognizing a very special lady that will be retiring from NCTA next week. For those that have read this column over the years, you should know that Mary Crawford has been putting her touch on these remarks every week. Mary, we will miss you and hope that we can continue to make these columns as informative and well written as you have done for the past nine years.

NCTA Events:

Oct. 24, 26-28: NCTA to College Fairs at nine Omaha-area high schools

Oct. 26-28: 95th National FFA Convention & Expo, NCTA Booth #2604, Indianapolis

Oct. 29-30: NCTA Stock Dog Clinic with Laura Stimatze, LTC Arena

Nov. 3: Career Fair, Student Success Center (The Barn)

Nov. 9: District 11 FFA Career Development Events, NCTA Campus

Nov. 14: NCTA Discovery Day, Education Center

Nov. 19: Aggie Alumni Association East Campus Tailgate, UNL Animal Science Complex, Lincoln

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 for 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.



NCTA Dean Larry Gossen hosted a reception for 2022 recipients of the FFA American Degree who are students at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis. Gossen's jacket from Cherryvale, Kansas hangs behind him. He is joined by Aggie students, from left, Caitlin Smee, Ness City, Kansas FFA; Aleena Wagner, Bridgeport FFA and Gwen Olberding of Falls City FFA. (Andela Taylor photo / NCTA)

Online article: <https://go.unl.edu/ai9e>

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